

**The Black Churches in Wheelock
Robertson County, Texas**

Estelle Mitchell Adams

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About the Author Estelle Mitchell Adams

Christianity has progressed on the wings of song from the birth of Christ to our day. While we cherish the past, we must envision the future. May God grant to us the same vision for the future that he provided for those who went before us.

Born and raised in Wheelock, Texas, I received an education in the Wheelock Colored School, E. A. Kemp High School in Bryan, Texas, a Bachelor's degree in history from Bishop College, a Master's degree from Prairieview A&M, and post graduate studies at Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. I taught school for thirty seven years in Wheelock, Bryan and Dallas, Texas, retiring in 1987 in the Dallas Independent School District.

Little has been said or written about the accomplishments of the black people in the Wheelock Community. I do not want the accomplishments of the blacks to be forgotten. I want to keep it on all minds of how our descendants lived and made progress. This writing is just a drop of what has happened in the past. I want to increase people's awareness of what happened to help define the role African Americans played in the development of Texas and in the Wheelock community. With little or no education some people in Wheelock were workers on the plantations, while many owned land. There were carpenters, brick masons, hunters, fishers, tanners, and carvers. Even after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, many blacks, although they had been freed, were the ones who made the plantations flourish and provide the economic backbone for the state of Texas that we know today.

I am inclined to believe that difficulties, poverty, and hardships always can be overcome and goodness prevails. Perseverance triumphs over any situation. We are to inspire others and encourage them along the way. Our people always possessed a sense of ambition, vision, and righteousness. What has been accomplished is the result of their prayers, toils, sacrifices, and opportunities provided by the schools and colleges established in the Southland.

The community church school played a great part in your spiritual life, social life, and your education. People helped each other in a collective effort. Church was a gathering place to exchange ideas and get information. All these things were done through the churches.

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The Black Churches in Wheelock Robertson County, Texas

Throughout the history of the world, progress and civilization have been advanced by the application of certain principles and ideals. Religion was always close to the human hand and heart.

The African American black church contributed much to the development of the United States, Texas, and the Wheelock community.

Trump (Triumph) Baptist Church, Old New Hope Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Sharon Chapel African Methodist Church, New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, and the Church of God in Christ were established within the Wheelock community in approximately that order. New Hope Missionary Baptist Church is the only church active in 2015.

New Hope Baptist had service on the first Sunday of the month until 1986, at which time the third Sunday of the month was adopted. Sharon Chapel Methodist Church had their services on the second Sunday of the month, and Pleasant Grove Baptist Church had their services on the fourth Sunday of the month. Church of God had services on the third Sunday of the month.

With church services planned on different Sundays, community members had the opportunity to visit churches of their choice. Much planning and progress shared during the visits after church made a better community.

Trump (Triumph) Baptist Church

The Trump (originally Triumph) Baptist Church may have been the first black slave church in the Wheelock Community. Very little is known about the church but the church cemetery has been located in the woods on land which is now known as Jack Rabbit Lane between Old San Antonio Road and Farm Road #391. Old settlers are buried there. The cemetery (referred to as "Trump" Cemetery) was lost until 2001 when historian Robert Golf Jr. located it on the property of Mr. Drew Moss. A Texas State historical marker was applied for by Mr. Golf, approved by the State of Texas in 2004, and installed at the front entrance of the cemetery which, although now surrounded by woods, can be entered from Jack Rabbit Lane. Robert Golf Jr., the researcher responsible for the discovery, knew that a few of his relatives were buried there and in 2014 a Texas death certificate (#35456) of one relative, Mary Kay Love, documented burial in the Triumph (not Trump) Cemetery on July 12, 1931. This may have been the last documented burial there. It's easy to see how over time the name evolved from "Triumph" to "Trump" Cemetery.

When talking about the Old New Hope Church, Joe Ray stated that there was another Baptist church in the community, not far from Old New Hope. It was in the Dunn Creek Settlement, between Benchley and Hearne, Texas. He remembered the church, but he was too young to remember the families; neither did he remember what happened to the church and its members.

The church was a frame structure and the interior of the sanctuary was plain and simple. Frances Dunn Gary stated that she played a pump organ there.

It is believed that this was the beginning of this community where slaves lived and were buried.

Sallye Dunn Hollis stated that she believed Triumph Baptist Church was organized in the 1820s. She joined and was baptized at Trump Baptist Church, which was located in the woods near Old New Hope. The road leading to the church was called Rabbit Lane. Katie Mae Brown stated that her grandparents (the Floyd Browns) are buried in the Trump Cemetery.

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church

Nancy Walker said that in 1887 Wheelock Church (later named Pleasant Grove Baptist Church) was organized by Reverend Alfred Rodgers. This was a log cabin church. Although it was reported that Pleasant Grove split from New Hope Baptist Church or that, after the community was divided into sections, perhaps this church was organized, this information is not accurate. Wheelock Church relocated as Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Bryan, Texas, in 1963 because most of their members had moved to Bryan.

A portion of this history of the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church was written by Nancy Walker and, before she passed, given to Minerva Sims Walker who added details to create the 1982 presentation of the history of the church in Bryan, Texas. The history was then passed on to Estelle Mitchell Adams. The number of years mentioned in the presentation is relative to the 1963 relocation date.

*History of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church
Water Oak and Juniper Street
Bryan, Texas*

"To the Mistress/Master of the hour, Pastor, Visiting Ministers, other visitors, members, and friends. Another year has passed, and the Lord has blessed us to witness another day of Thanksgiving and worshipping together. When this church was organized, none of us present today were here then. One faithful member, Sister Nancy Walker, recorded the organizing of this church under the ministry of Reverend Alford Rodgers.

We have come a long way from a one-room log cabin to a beautiful edifice. We would not have been able to chronolog this information had it not been for Sister Nancy Walker's record-keeping of the work of the church. Her records have provided us with the history of this church.

This church has had some great ministers. Some we did not know, some we did know. We know the organization of the church was under Reverend Alford Rodgers who served for a number of years. After Rev. Rodgers' ministry, a number of ministers followed such as:

Rev. G. Littman

Rev. Adam Wright

Rev. Charlie Anderson

Rev. Henry Sterling

Rev. George Station

Rev. Pete Diggs

Rev. J. C. Clifton

Rev. J. D. Henderson

Rev. P. R. Humber - under his leadership a small church building was constructed. Rev. Humber pastored for a while, and then the following ministers came. They were:

Rev. C. C. Littleton

Rev. J. E. Miles

Rev. E. A. Auyers

Rev. R. B. Bradley

Rev. J. T. Atkerson

*Rev. R. H. Humber
Rev. J. E. Williams
Rev. G. W. Washing
Rev. J. E. Brown
Rev. A. W. Ray
Rev. E. E. Garvin*

We are proud of our past leadership and the love they had for each other. The work of the church would not have been possible without this leadership and the Almighty God, who has brought us and kept us thus far.

We know that in the beginning of this church, there was not much light, but the Bible gave light for the way. There was very little warmth, only one stove. But deep down in the hearts of the members the warmth of God's love and the love they had for each other kept them warm. We have passed over the rough road that led us here. We pitched our tents on land near turbulent waters. But the leader who waited in the camp caught the gleam of a new day and each leader in his turn brought us to a greater and more secure success. We, the members of the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, are glad to be a part of that great body. We, as baptized believers, are glad that we can join in that Great Chorus of glad Thanksgiving, for the goodness the Lord has showered on us. We are proud of our present leadership. We hope that the Light will continue burning through us until a New Generation has caught the gleam and go steadily marching on.

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church has been at this present location for nineteen years. We entered into this building on November 10, 1963. The Reverend A. W. Ray pastored for eleven years and under his leadership we all worked together and built this building with the help of the Lord.

Our present Pastor, Rev. E. E. Garvin, has been with us seven years and the accomplishments through his leadership have been wonderful. Accomplish means to succeed in completing, perform, or achieve. We have also improved in our church work and a number of new members have been added to the church.

Today, Pleasant Grove with its outstanding leadership and its background of loyal followers stands as a city that sits on a hill with its lights shining through its various ministries shedding rays throughout this land. Since we who are here have been helped along the way by those who have served and gone on, we must inspire those coming on, that the light will continue burning until a New Generation has caught the gleam and go steadily marching on. We pray to ever hold those principles of faith and doctrine that have made us useful and inspirational. May we ever keep our wicks trimmed for services to God and our fellow man. May the pilot of light and truth and honesty and understanding keep burning, that even the unborn will be able to catch its glow.

As proud as we are of our past and present leadership, we are constantly praying to keep humble so that the Master may be able to point at us with pride as those who kept the faith, stayed in the flight for right and righteousness, and who, one by one, will answer to the Higher Call.

To all the ministers who have gone on, we thank God for each and every one of them. We want to acknowledge today the leadership of those who have led us this far. We want you to

know that we do appreciate that service you have rendered to us. We are praying that we, as a membership, be loyal followers, obey your leadership and, above all, hold to God's unchanging hand and look to him, from whence our help cometh and all our help cometh from the Lord.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Sister Minerva [Sims] Walker, Church Member and Secretary
Sister Johnnie Mae Cross, Assistant Secretary
Rev. E. E. Garvin, Pastor"*

On November 15, 2003, Mrs. Elmira Chambers provided the names of the early settlers of Wheelock/Pleasant Grove Baptist Church and of other families who followed. The name of the church was changed from Wheelock Church to Pleasant Grove Baptist Church as part of the 1963 move to Bryan in Brazos County, Texas.

Early Settlers:

Will and Liza Mitchell
Richard and Ida Wooley
Ben and Mary Mitchell Williams
Marshall and Bertha Mitchell Sheppard
Edd and Suzie Lyons (Roberta Hickmon Lyons – Edd's daughter)
Peter and Nancy Walker
William and Cornelia Sims
Ray and Mamie Cavitt
Willis Perkins
Jessie and Carrie Jane Brown
Joe and Leona Nash
Henry and Pearl Chambers
Willie and Sara Ann Robinson
Joe and Harriet Ray
Essie and Mollie Payne
Henry and Cecelia Dunn
Lee and Hattie Taylor

Families Who Followed:

Jessie and Janie Johnson
Roy and Mamie Tipton (Arie Green was Roy Tipton's mother)
Norman and Maybell Cavitt
George and Betty Walker
Lizzie Walker and son Ivory Walker (She is the mother of Mamie Cavitt)
Jessie and Cleo Smith
William and Ida Hickmon
J. D. and Arlillian Ray

Andrew and Alice Ray
Reverend McCullough and Sadie
Reverend Sye and Della Murphy
Price and Sylevia Johnson
Willie and Sarah Ann Robinson
Nancy Grant
Anthony and Rachel Gator
Dicy Gooden
Ardella Green
Tom and Viola Curry
Daisy Davis (Mary Mitchell Williams' daughter)
George and Evy Payne
Clifford and Nettie Payne
Duncan Payne
Maxie and Cemonia Taylor
Alfred and Evan Ross
Alfred and Betty Smith
Teola Griffin



Pleasant Grove Baptist church, Wheelock, Texas

The three people at the right on the front row were two young sons of J.D. Ray, and J.D. Ray who was Chaplain of the Wheelock Cemetery for forty years. (His daughter Mildred Ray Davis was President of the Wheelock Cemetery Association.)

The person third from the right on the third row is William Walker who in 2015 is still living at age 83 in California. His brother Archie Walker is third from the right on the fourth row. William still remembers the 1928 baby contest staged by this church and New Hope Baptist. (The winning baby was Estelle Mitchell of New Hope.)

The Church of God In Christ Wheelock, Robertson County, Texas

A brief historical sketch of this church was given by Mary Smith, the daughter of the late Reverend Perry and Luverta Perry.

In the early 1920s the church of God In Christ was called "Holiness, Sanctified Church." The church was founded by four strong Christian men: the late Reverend Perry Smith, Charlie Murphy, Reverend Bill Morrison and Noah Morrison. A few months later the late Robert Goffney joined the group, which made him the fifth founder.

The first meetings were held in their homes with songs, prayers, Bible readings, and preaching. The news was spread around the community that five men were seeking a religious church for the community and anyone who wanted to become a believer in God. These God-sent men saw the need to have a church built for their people. They set out to buy two acres of land on the Old San Antonio Road. A white man by the name of George Dunn Sr. was approached to purchase land he owned. Mr. Dunn was a believer in God, and came forth and donated the two acres of land to the black people to build a church for them to worship in.

The five men with the help of others purchased the materials and built the church. In the state of Texas at that time the Bishop was J. H. Galloway. The group asked the state Bishop to come and organize the church and to send a pastor to preside over the church and congregation. The church was organized and Reverend S. R. Robinson from Waco, Texas was named as the pastor. Others to follow as pastor were Reverend F. M. Thompson, Reverend Bill Morrison, and Reverend Perry Smith.

The five founders were appointed as deacons of the church, and later ordained as Elders by the Bishop. Reverend Bill Morrison and Reverend Perry Smith were the last pastors of the church.

The church provided Bible teaching and training for all ages, Sun Shine Band for the smaller children, Sunday School, and Young People's Willing Worker class. The National headquarters were in Memphis, Tennessee where the literature was purchased. The State headquarters was in Waco, Texas.

The church grew as people moved into the community. All members played an active part in the church activities. Corrine Morrison, Johnnie Mae Smith, Lee Goffney, Gladys Smith, Mary Smith, and Rachel Smith were secretaries for the church. The bible teachers were Mrs. Luverta Smith, Mrs. Susie Morrison, Mrs. Noah Morrison, Mrs. Murphy, and Mrs. Mattie Goffney.

Many elderly people passed and members began to move from the farms to the cities. The church membership became few. The Bishop Reverend T. D. Iglehart, and members of the church voted to consolidate the church with the Church of God in Christ in Bryan, Texas. The church moved to Bryan, Texas, where Reverend Perry Smith was appointed as pastor. He pastored until he resigned in the late 1970s. The church is still alive in Bryan and worshippers are still praising God for his goodness today.

Sharon Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church

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Wheelock, Robertson County, Texas

Sharon Chapel was founded around the early 19th century. This church had a very small congregation, but all of the surrounding churches in the community supported each other.

Sharon Chapel African American Methodist Episcopal Church was located southeast, across the road from the present New Hope Baptist Church. Most of its members lived on plantations.

After so many years of not having new blood in the church house and the rise of World War II, many of the rural churches closed because the members moved to the city for higher-paying jobs. This church could no longer sustain itself and was moved to Bryan, Texas, July 7, 1947, because its members had moved there.

The members who were on the roll when the church moved were the R. H. Hickmon family, the Henry Gooden family, and the Floyd and Annie Brown family.

There are no recorded details, only oral histories from longtime members and friends. Carrie Jane Brown Walker who grew up in the Wheelock community was a member of Sharon Chapel at an early age and provided much of this information.

The church's pastoral Sunday was held the second Sunday of each month. The Conference closed the church when H. R. Hickmon was a trustee. The church was sold to Clark Kellough for three hundred dollars. Two hundred and seventy dollars was donated to Allen Chapel in Bryan, Texas. The majority of the members moved to Bryan and joined Allen Chapel where Reverend J. F. Baker was pastor. Allen Chapel welcomed the members and purchased carpet runners and chairs for the church. The thirty dollars that was leftover was donated to Bethel A.M.E. in Hearne, Texas because the family of Floyd and Annie Brown moved to Hearne and joined Bethel.

There was sadness in the community to see the church moved. The Gooden family and H. R. Hickmon remained in the community for a while, but they later moved on. The preachers' names are not known at this time. Reverend Arthur Nelson stayed for several years. Reverend Johnson was appointed and was pastor until he had a heart attack. All were from Hearne, Texas.

The preachers had no form of transportation. They would catch a ride with the mailman and spend the night in Floyd and Annie Brown's home for church service. Carrie Jane Brown Walker, daughter to Floyd and Annie Brown, recalled Floyd and Annie Brown, H. R. and Savannah Hickmon, and Ella Gooden and family. (Ella's husband, Reverend Henry Gooden, was a Baptist and he was a member at New Hope Baptist Church across the road.) Ulysses Hickmon, Pete and Katie Garner, Levia Jackson and sons John and Raymond, Jessie and Cleo Smith, Pearl Hearne and family—Corine, Reginald, Elmer, and Anita—were members also.

Sharon Chapel's long time members and pastors are not known at this point in time. We know that they had a deep sense of religion, faith, and believed in God. It was very hard in those days. The members kept the faith and moved on with spiritual memories and flexibility in the face of change.

History of New Hope Missionary Baptist Church Wheelock, Robertson County, Texas

Members from all churches near Wheelock visited, shared their income, and helped to build the churches and the community, but only New Hope Missionary Baptist Church has weathered the storm and is still there. This was/is the church of the family of Estelle Mitchell Adams, and this information has been gathered by her from her personal memories and interviews with various church members. She is working on acquiring a special State of Texas historical marker for the church. The church still exists today (2015) with a congregation of six members still worshipping. In Estelle's words:

The old New Hope Baptist Church was in the woods. Between 1911 and 1915 it was moved to its current location on Hearne road, now FM 391, and is now called the New Hope Missionary Baptist Church.

Modern life brought hardships to the churches. Hope Baptist Church's frame had no air conditioning, heat, or running water. The church has had no "new blood" to replace those members who left the area for bigger cities and opportunities. Currently, the Mitchell descendants come often and give their support. Each year on the first Sunday in June, members, former members, and friends come to cherish old memories and give support to the church. These include the Gary family, the Dunn family, the Davis family, the Walker family, and the Mitchell family.

It is believed that after the Emancipation Proclamation was declared and the Negroes of Texas were freed, the Christian Freedmen of this community began enthusiastic togetherness. Most of them were unlettered groups of men and women who felt that prayers were needed for guidance in charting their careers. We do not know the ministers who were instrumental in organizing the church. There are no living members who were in the organization. Therefore, most of the history up to recent years was taken from elderly members of the church, especially the Mitchell and Dunn families.

It is believed that the church was organized possibly before the 1880s. Joe Ray who lived in Fort Worth, Texas stated that he was seven years old when he remembered the church. He lived to be ninety-five years old when he passed in November of 1988. Francis Gary was one hundred and one years old when she passed in 1998. All believed the church was established before 1880.

Rebecca Simmons, ninety-seven when she passed in 1996, said that homeowners, rather than plantation dwellers, established this church. This is why New Hope Missionary Baptist Church is still here today—because the homeowner families stayed in the area and built this church and community. My grandparents Sam and Lucy Mitchell were the first, original home/land owners; they owned more land than any blacks in Wheelock, Texas. The next home owners were Henry and Cecelia Dunn Sr., Jim and Johnnie Petty, Willis and Amanda Dunn Perkins, Reverend J. D. Dunn, and Jennie Dunn Sr., William (Bill) and Cornelius Sims, George and Minerva Cavitt, Hector and Leola Montgomery, and Eli and Josephine Carter. These pioneers had unusual character, were sympathetic, economical, ambitious, generous, and honest.

It is said that the late Eli and Josephine Carter, daughter of Nuke and Sal Walker, donated the land for the first church to be built. It was located in the woods west of Spring Creek

settlement between Benchley, Texas, and Hearne, Texas. The Old Sutton Road was the mail road leading to the small road to the church. This road still exists to the right of New Hope Missionary Baptist Church today.

When the first New Hope Baptist Church was in the woods, on the first Sunday of the month one could hear voices coming out of the woods singing and praying for God to bless their efforts. Many prayed and waited, but before their prayers were brought to pass, God called them to rest. But surely as the Bible says, "Their works do follow them."

Until 1986 New Hope had service on the first Sunday of the month, at which time the third Sunday of the month was adopted. Today (2015) New Hope is the only remaining Negro/African-American church in Wheelock.

The first Sunday began at New Hope Missionary Baptist Church with the ringing of the church bell. The church dues were twenty-five cents for adults and ten cents for children. The church's auxiliaries were: Sunday School, Baptist Training Union, Mission Society, and Brotherhood, Starlight Band (for girls), Shepherd Boys League, and Choir, which included teens, young adults and older adults.

Easter and Christmas meant much to children in the community. Easter meant getting the church ready early on Saturday evening. The Easter program was a glorious occasion with music, solos and speeches. Then came the Easter egg hunt after the program. The children came dressed in the finest Easter outfits they could afford. Christmas was celebrated in the same fashion as Easter except for this occasion the big cedar Christmas tree, decorated and filled with gifts, was the center of attraction.

The early families of the church were my grandparents Sam and Lucy Mitchell, Reverend Jackie and Jennie Dunn Sr., James (Jim) and Johnnie Petty, Eli Josephine Carter, Hector and Lee Ola Montgomery, Sam and Emiline Taylor Robertson, Miss Minnie Goss, Lizzie Walker, Moss Richardson, Willis and Amanda Perkins, Henry "Chuck" and Sealey Dunn, George and Minerva Cavitt, Edith Johnson, Gus Hill, Jim and Mary Tillery Dunn, Bill and Frankie Dunn, and Emma Dunn. The church and community continued to grow. The children of families in the church and community married, had children, and their offspring grew up in the church. (The families of Savannah Childress, Floyd Brown, and Reverend Henry Gooden were members of the Methodist church.)

Joe Nash's wife and his wagon full of children always drove 25 miles to worship at New Hope where he was a member. Other members were the families of Freda Williams, George Childress, and George Astin.

When Pleasant Grove Baptist Church moved to Bryan, some of their members joined New Hope. They were: Mrs. Bertha Sheppard, Sam and Daisy Davis, Willis Perkins and his wife, Eddie Lyons and daughter, Robert and Tommie Johnson. In the early seventies Robert and Mary Walker joined the church. R. L. and Ruthie Gooden and family joined, but the Goodens stayed for only a short period of time before moving to Bryan, Texas.

Church pastors Reverend L. G. Globe of Bryan, Texas, Moses Lights, and C. C. Littleton of Bryan, and George W. Williams of Benchley, Texas all pastored for a very short time, probably because of the need to arrive on Saturday for the Sunday service. From Hearne, Texas, came Pastors A. E. Ayers, ___ Golfe, R. A. Smiley, Jack Dunn (interim), A. A. Manning, R. M. Blocker, and W. C. Adams.

Transportation was impossible for some of the ministers. When Reverend R. A. Smiley had no transportation from Hearne, Texas, to Wheelock, the church members decided to purchase a surrey and a horse for him to make the trip each first Sunday for church service.

The deacons were my grandfather Sam Mitchell, Hector Montgomery, Eli Carter, Mose Richardson, George Cavitt, Willis Perkins, and other names that are not known. The church has no cornerstone, and today (2015) one has still not been established. The first known church pianist and pipe organist was Bessie Mitchell, daughter of Sam and Lucy Mitchell followed by Frances Dunn Gary. Other musicians were Willie Mae Wooley Holt, Lucille Robinson Bradley, Vera Lee Mitchell Phillips, Estelle Mitchell Adams of Dallas, Gloria Johnson Chandler of San Antonio, and Betty Davis, all of whom were/are the grand and great-granddaughters of Sam and Lucy Mitchell. Additional musicians were Alma Gary, Willie Mae Dunn, the granddaughters of the late Reverend and Mrs. J. D. Dunn, Jr., and Mrs. Mack of Hearne, Texas, the daughter of Reverend R. H. Blocker.

Hector Montgomery was the Sunday School superintendent in the Old New Hope Church. His wife Ora Montgomery was the president of the Mission Society. Their daughter Mattie Montgomery was the secretary for the Sunday School. It is said that they were very smart members.

It is known that Baptism was in a tank or creek near the Hearne Road and on the land of George and Minerva Cavitt. Later however, Baptism was conducted on the Clark Kellough place across from where the current New Hope Missionary Baptist Church stands. The church included a one-teacher community school. Mr. Rocha Middleton was one of the first known teachers. His tenure was for two years. The church also served as a meeting place for community meetings or social gatherings as well as for recreational activities. The nineteenth of June (or "Juneteenth") was celebrated on the church ground until the church moved from the woods to Wheelock, Texas.

Many board meetings, revivals, political meetings, Masonic meetings, Eastern Star and other such organizations met in the church. The "Juneteenth" celebration then took place on George and Minerva Cavitt's land. Sam Dunn was known for making the "best lemonade." He made it by the barrels and sold it for the church.

Although Hector Montgomery and the Carters lived near the church, for most of the people the distance was quite a problem. Some of them walked or rode in buggies or wagons, but the roads were in bad condition. A creek ran very close to the back of the church, and a very bad road posed a problem and concern. Much discussion was done regarding moving the church to the Hearne Road where most of the membership lived. Very little money was available and the members were concerned whether they could raise the money to purchase the land on the Hearne Road for the church. Sam and Lucy Mitchell led the drive with Reverend R. A. Smiley as the pastor. The women of the church put on church programs to raise money to move the church. Reverend Smiley's health was now failing, and he was compelled to retire before the move. Reverend Lindley/Lindsley was elected and served for a very short time during the move. Sam Mitchell passed before the final decision was made to move the church and his wife Lucy Mitchell (my grandmother) took the lead.

New Hope members wanted the new structure to look the same as the old church building. Tillman Morgan, a white carpenter who lived in Wheelock, was contacted to take

a look at the old building to see if he could build the new one to look the same. He did come and reported to the pastor and deacons that he could do the job. He was hired and he did build the new building.

When the church was moved between 1911 and 1915 from the woods to the new location, the community was divided. One group, the Henry Seals area, included families of Freedmen from the Seals and Dunn Plantations who might have gone to the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. The other group included the Old New Hope landowner families of the Mitchells, the Pettys, the Dunns, Joe Nash, Willie Perkins, Simuel Cavitt, and Reverend J. D. Dunn.

The New Hope Missionary Baptist Church was constructed from parts of the old church in the woods by men in the church and community who tore down the old church and moved it by wagons to its new location. Mr. James Gary, a deacon at New Hope, stated that Fred Dunn, the brother of his wife Frances Gary, pulled the first nail and plank off the church to be torn down. Mr. Gary also stated that he, along with Elijah Mitchell, Sam Mitchell Jr., Arthur Mitchell, Norman Mitchell, Mose Richardson, J. D. Dunn, Jr. and Sr., Jim Petty, Harvey Petty, Arthur Felix, Walter Petty, George Cavitt, Hector Montgomery, Willis Perkins and son, Jimmy Perkins, Eli Carter and sons, Sam Johnson, and others, helped to move the church by wagons. The “new” building looked the same as the old one, and the members were satisfied.

The location today is nine miles from Hearne, Texas, ten miles from Franklin, Texas, twenty-five miles from Bryan, and seventeen miles from Normangee, Texas.

Reverend Aaron A. Manning was called to the New Hope Baptist Church on April 11, 1927. The pastoral agreement between the church and Reverend Manning specified that “we are willing to pay you all that are taken up on that day, the first Sunday.” Reverend J. D. Dunn Jr. was the Assistant Pastor.

Reverend Manning was a dynamic pastor. He was well educated, a born preacher, and a teacher. Always inspiring, he led the church and community with high ideals. Reverend Manning was always treated with the greatest respect and he always had great respect for the members and former members of the church. Many times money was short, but the members gave food to pay him for his services. Many times his car failed him, and somehow my father Elijah Mitchell got the message to come and get him on a Saturday evening. Reverend Manning would spend the night with Elijah and Amanda Mitchell before Sunday services. The church was in a struggle for money, but Reverend Manning knew how to raise money. In the spring of 1928, he and the pastor of Pleasant Grove church, either Reverend Atkinson or Bradley, staged a baby contest with Mr. and Mrs. George Walker’s baby, Travis, representing Pleasant Grove and Elijah and Amanda Mitchell’s baby, Estelle (that’s me!), representing New Hope. It was a hot contest, with members of the two churches in fierce competition to raise the most money so that their baby could win. Baby Estelle Mitchell won the contest! This was the first baby contest in the New Hope church, and might have been the last. There was no recount to confirm baby Estelle’s victory. There are no records to show how much money was raised from the contest. But in 2015 J. D. Dunn still remembers the competition. It is said that the Walker family will never forget it!

Reverend Manning’s health failed, and the Reverend R. M. Blocker of Hearne, Texas, was

called in 1963. Reverend Blocker was well known in the community, for he was a friend of Reverend Manning and had conducted many revivals at New Hope. He served until his eyesight and health failed. He knew the Bible so well that he continued to pastor after he lost his sight. He enlisted the help of Daisy Williams Davis who sat in the front pew. He announced the sermon topic and the relevant scripture topic, then requested that Daisy read the scripture, after which he began to preach.

In 1983 the church called Reverend W. A. Adams from Hearne, Texas, as pastor and he served until January of 2003.

In the late thirties, about 1937 or 1938, the pastor and members decided to build a community center on the church ground. It was located on the east corner of the church ground next to the road that goes into Hearne Road. This road leads to Franklin Road. This center was used for many church activities, especially the Saturday night fish fry where homemade ice cream and lemonade were sold. The money was used to pay for the upkeep of the church and to pay for the center.

The late Mr. J. R. Delley who lived in Hearne, Texas, was the county agent for the Wheelock Community Center. A lot of training was done and workshops were held to teach people how to farm, mattress making, canning, preserving meats, and health care for the families.

The church bell that was in a wooden frame in front of the church was used for church service, letting the community know that someone had passed away, or for funerals. The bell is still in the church today. There was a special service re-dedicating the bell.

In the early forties Reverend Manning and the men of the church remodeled the building. The three posts were removed from the center of the church. The pulpit was remodeled and remains what it is today, and the front entrance was moved to face the Hearne Road.

After the church moved, Lucy Mitchell called a meeting with all people of the community to discuss the desired objectives of confronting the whites to build the Negroes a school for the education of the young Negro children. .

One school was built on the Henry Seals plantation and a second, the Wheelock Colored School, was built in Wheelock. The Seals school had one room. The Wheelock school had two rooms.

The principal at Wheelock was Mr. Fraizer; Mrs. Billy Henderson, Mrs. Dean, and Lula Robinson were the teachers in the Wheelock School.

In the early sixties, after the Seals one-room school was closed, Trustees gave the school building to New Hope Church. The old Seals school building was moved and attached to the New Hope church building by men in the church community. Arthur and Elijah Mitchell donated paint. Vera Lee Mitchell Phillips gave the church a stove and a refrigerator; also, four green tablecloths. Amanda Mitchell donated the curtains. In 1984 Marion Mitchell had the restrooms and water installed. Mr. and Mrs. McComb of Wheelock donated and paid for the church and dining hall to be painted. Elijah Mitchell and Arthur Mitchell bought and made the tables and benches for the cafeteria. Mr. and Mrs. Conway had the fans installed in 1989. The members purchased an organ and a piano in the fall of 1988. A memorial stone was installed in 1989.

Reverend A. A. Manning and members designated the first Sunday in June as Homecoming. We wanted to celebrate and we wanted members and friends far and near to come for Homecoming. Box dinners were served while baptizing and church services were held all day. This was called Dinner on the Ground at Homecoming. All churches in the community participated.

One ironwood stove heated the church. Elijah Mitchell always made the fire for the church so it would be warm when the members arrived for service. He kept the lanterns clean and lit for the night service. He opened and closed the church and, after Elijah passed, Reverend J. D. Dunn opened and closed the church until he died.

There were always men called tramps walking the road. They would stop by Elijah and Amanda Mitchell's house and ask for water and food.

Amanda always had food for the children and for anyone who came by needing something to eat. At breakfast time she baked a big batch of biscuits, which could become snacks for her children or for strangers. As the wood burning stove began to cool off she would put sweet potatoes in to bake in the retained heat. Her offerings always included sweet milk in a jar, and usually some combination of baked sweet potatoes, biscuits with jelly or preserves, and buttered corn bread. Occasionally there might be ginger bread. The food donations were presented in a little brown sack.

If it were near night the travelers might ask if they could sleep in the church. Elijah would tell them, "You are welcome to stay, but don't smoke and set the church on fire. Be sure to pray and close the door when you leave." No person or organization was ever turned away or stopped at the church door.

Once a month on a Saturday evening before church Sunday the Mitchell children and Gary children would come and clean the church for Sunday's worship. The boys would chop grass, and the children would pick wild flowers to beautify the pulpit. All service to the church was free. The pastor received twenty-five dollars while the pianist and clerk were paid one dollar.

Elijah Mitchell and Arthur Mitchell would gather the men and boys to cut trees down for wood in the winter. The wood was used in the ironwood stove to keep the church and school warm. When the wood got low, they went out again and cut cords of wood.

In December of 1989, a former member, Mrs. Sally Dunn Hollis of Ft. Worth, Texas, donated the picture of Jesus Christ that hangs on the church wall. The Lord's Supper picture was given by Estelle Mitchell Adams. This picture had come from the home of Ethel Mitchell Paige.

The descendants of Sam and Lucy Mitchell, at their family reunion on 1988, voted to beautify the church with comfortable church pews. Estelle Adams led the drive. She purchased the pulpit stand and communion/collection table in memory of her parents, Elijah and Amanda Mitchell.

Ever since the existence of the Central District Association (a gathering of all the black churches in the Robertson County area), New Hope Baptist Church has been one of the leading small churches in the district.

The pastors were moderators, and the members held top offices in the Central District Sunday School, Baptist Training Union (B.T.U.) Congress, and the Association. Elijah

Mitchell served the longest term as treasurer for the forty-five years before he retired because of his age. His daughter, Estelle Mitchell Adams, was the youngest pianist for the Sunday School and B.T.U. Congress. She was fourteen years old and continued playing until 1948.

Today, the church has six members. Mrs. Frances Gary was the last surviving member of the Old New Hope Baptist Church, and was the daughter of the late Reverend Jack and Jennie Dunn. Francis Gary's husband, James Gary who passed in 1991 was a Secretary of New Hope Baptist Church and, after the death of Elijah Mitchell in 1977, was appointed Secretary/Treasurer.

The New Hope Missionary Baptist Church has always had on its roll active dedicated members. The members had courage. They always raised money before they purchased anything. The church was never in debt. New Hope is still the guiding light for the blacks in the Wheelock Community. The chief goal of Sam and Lucy Mitchell was to build New Hope Church for generations to come, and for all human beings to come and worship God. We owe them a debt of gratitude that can only be partially paid by worthwhile service to those with whom we come in contact.

May God continue to bless New Hope Baptist Church.

Estelle Mitchell Adams

The following lists the names of persons that donated money for the pews to be purchased:

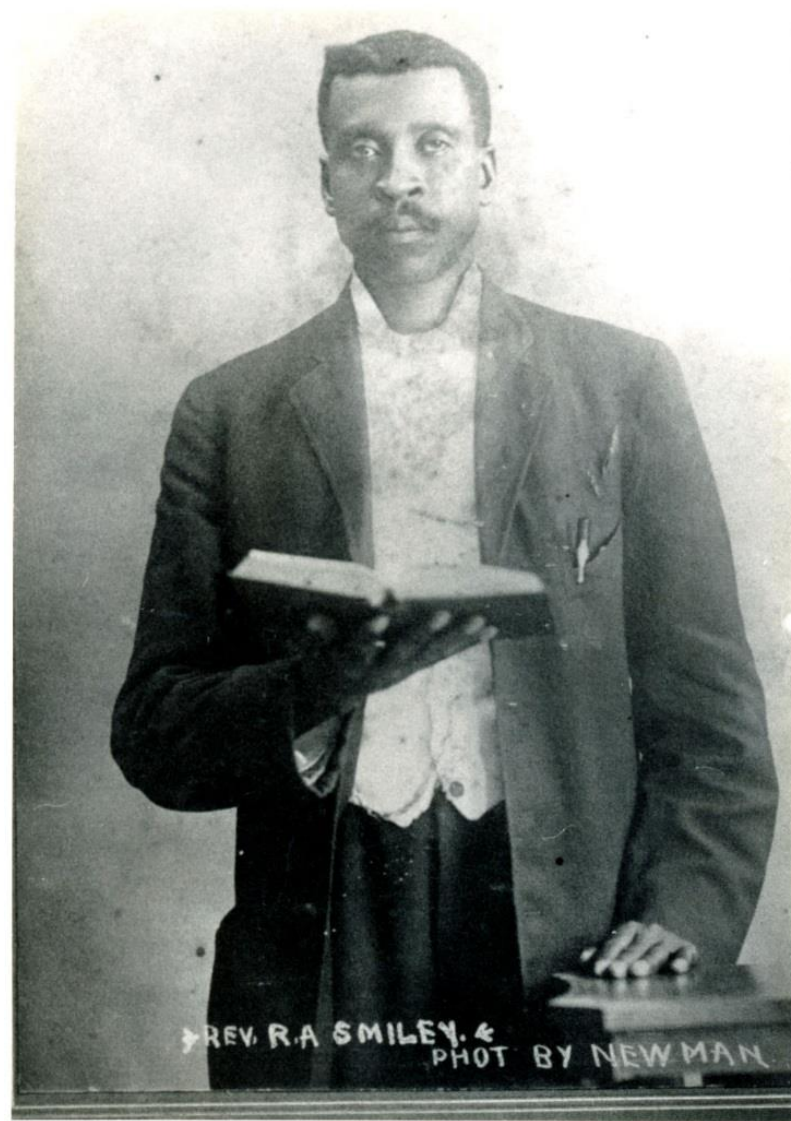
NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH PEW DONATIONS (MITCHELLS)

1989 - 1990

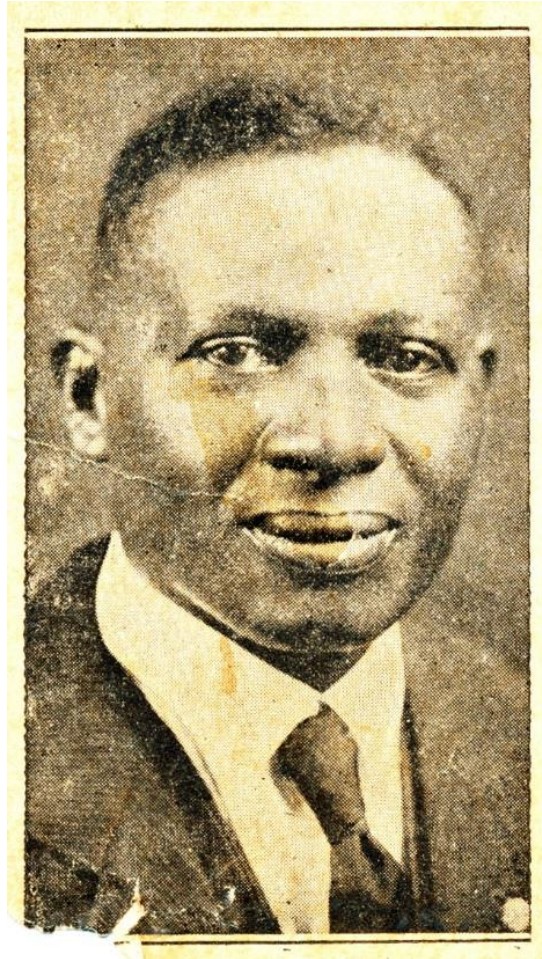
Barbara Williams	Los Angeles, California	\$ 25.00
Estelle Adams	Dallas, Texas	\$350.00
Ester Nicholas	California	\$ 25.00
Ralph D. Littleton	Hobbs, New Mexico	\$125.00
Espanolia Petty	Bryan, Texas	\$ 25.00
Walter Petty	College Station, Texas	\$ 5.00
Johnnie Petty Carter	Bryan, Texas	\$ 25.00
Elijah Johnson	Houston, Texas	\$ 25.00
Elijah Mitchell, Jr.	Pontiac, Michigan	\$100.00
Bessie Holt	San Antonio, Texas	\$ 50.00
Marjorie Carroll	San, Antonio, Texas	\$ 50.00
Odell Wafer	Sacramento, California	\$ 50.00
Velma Knox	Sacramento, California	\$ 25.00
Sophia Crump	Sacramento, California	\$ 25.00
Estelle John	Chicago, Illinois	\$ 25.00
Hattie Latson	Bryan, Texas	\$ 25.00
Helen Davis Cashaw	Houston, Texas	\$ 25.00
Samuel Mitchell	Dallas, Texas	\$ 5.00
B.F. Mitchell	Dallas, Texas	\$ 5.00
Marion Mitchell	Dallas, Texas	\$100.00
Mary Monroe	Bryan, Texas	\$ 25.00
Betty Davis	Wheelock, Texas	\$ 25.00
Mrs. Rebecca Simmons	Ft. Worth, Texas	\$150.00
& daughter Ruth Shaw		
Mrs. Sallye Hollis	Ft. Worth, Texas	\$ 20.00
Joe Galloway	New York, N.Y.	\$ 25.00
Rev. & Mrs. Marke Toles	Dallas, Texas	\$ 50.00
Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Banta	Seminole, Texas	\$ 20.00
Mr. & Mrs. Marjorie Walker Penson	Bryan, Texas	\$ 20.00
Mr. & Mrs. Leroy Jones	Dallas, Texas	\$ 25.00
Mr. & Mrs. David Edwards	San Angelo, Texas	\$ 20.00
Mr. & Mrs. Roscoe Hickman	Denver, Colorado	\$ 20.00
Mr. & Mrs. Alvin Lawler	Dallas, Texas	\$ 20.00
Mr. & Mrs. Zack Gray	Bryan, Texas	\$ 10.00
Mrs. Ethel Shipman	Bryan, Texas	\$ 10.00
Mrs. Ada Hansford	Dallas, Texas	\$ 10.00
Mr. George Cavitt	Bryan, Texas	\$ 50.00
Mrs. Mary Evans	Bryan, Texas	\$ 50.00
Mr. & Mrs. Leroy Williams	Dallas, Texas	\$ 10.00

Musical	\$100.00
James Gary Family	\$ 25.00
Floyd Gary	\$ 50.00
New Hope Church Donations	\$100.00
Don Miller	\$ 9.00
Adelle Dunn	\$ 25.00
Virginia Dunn Hodge	

Reverend R. A. Smiley
About 1880 - 1927
New Hope Baptist Church
Wheelock, Texas - Robertson County



Reverend Aaron A. Manning
April 11, 1927 - 1963
New Hope Baptist Church
Wheelock, Texas - Robertson County



The above is the likeness of Rev. Aaron A. Manning, Hearne, Tex. An Evangelist Pastor and Teacher

Pastor of New Hope Baptist Church Wheelock, Progress Baptist Church Bremond, and Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Bailey Ville, Tex. The Recording Sect'y of Central District Association, President of The St. Emanuel District Sunday School Congress, Bible Teacher of St. Emanuel Association and Good Hope Western District Woman's Convention, President and Founder of The Baptist Minister and Christian Worker Union Institute of Robertson County and Adjacent Counties.

Director of the Baptist Ministers Theological Class of Hearne, Tex. and a Loyal Friend to Christ and his Church.

Wheeler

April 11, 1907

Rev. A. A. Mannans
Hearne Tex

Dear Kind Sir:-

This only to inform you that you have been call as a pastor of the New Hope Baptist Church of Wheeler

We are willing to pay you all that are taken up on that day which are on the 1st Sunday

If any more arrangements about the salary it will better arrangement in the first Saturday in Business Meeting.

We are looking for you next 1st Saturday evening in time for Business Meeting

If you are coming please give a message

Sincerely yours
Geopetra Smith Sec
Wheeler Texas

Copy of Rev. A. A Manning's Pastoral Agreement

*Wheelock, Tex
April 11, 1927*

Rev. A .A. Mannans

Hearne, Texas

Dear Kind Sir –

This is only to inform you that you have been call as a Pastor of the New Hope Baptist Church of Wheelock.

We are willing to pay you all that are taken up on that day which are on the 1st Sunday. If any more arrangement about the Salary we will better arrangement it after First Saturday in Business Meeting. We are looking for you next 1st Saturday evening in time for Business Meeting.

If you are coming ahead of these time please give a brief ans. by tomorrow.

Sincerely yours

*Cleopatra Smith Sec.
Wheelock, Texas*

Reverend R. M. Blocker
New Hope Baptist Church
Wheelock, Texas – Robertson County
1963 – 1983



A FRIEND TO GOD

REV. R. M. BLOCKER
Pastor
Valley Grove Baptist Church
Valdo, New Mexico
Moderator
State Progressive Baptist Association
The State of New Mexico

Reverend W. C. Adams and Wife
Mrs. Arjorie Adams
1983 – January 5, 2003
New Hope Baptist Church – Robertson County



New Hope Baptist Church, Wheelock, Texas



The Black Churches in Wheelock, Robertson County, Texas