

## **Pilgrim's Rest Primitive Baptist Church**

### **Cherry Ridge, Union Parish, Louisiana**

### **1840s-1850s**

Very little is known about the Pilgrim's Rest Primitive Baptist Church. About all we know is that in March 1850, the church acquired five acres of land located a short distance north/northwest of Farmerville, roughly four miles south/southeast of the village of Cherry Ridge. Based upon those involved in this land donation, it appears that Elder James Taylor served as the pastor of Pilgrim's Rest, whereas Edmond Hayes and John T. Matthews served as deacons. Moreover, the man who gave the land to the church, John W. Hendrick, was almost certainly a church member.

Pilgrim's Rest Church undoubtedly formed in the mid-1840s, following the significant migration into the Cherry Ridge community during the 1840-1846 period, primarily by settlers from central Alabama. Many of them followed the Baptist faith, a denomination that had gone through much internal conflict in the 1820s and 1830s over the question of missions. In the mid-1830s, the Alabama anti-mission faction of the Baptists, those who wished to maintain traditional Baptist doctrines and practices, had begun to formally split from those who supported missions, Sunday Schools, Temperance Societies, etc. The traditionalists styled themselves as *Primitive Baptists*, but many referred to them as *Hardshell Baptists*, *Old School Baptists*, or the *antis*. Beginning in the mid-1830s, Primitive Baptist Churches across the South began withdrawing from the Missionary Baptist Associations and forming their own Primitive Baptist Associations.

We do not know exactly how long the Pilgrim's Rest Primitive Baptist Church remained in existence. Churches in those days often formed when groups of like-minded pioneers settled near one another in an unpopulated region. In some cases, these churches lasted only a few years, but sometimes they flourished for a few decades and then waned as the original settlers died or moved away. At this time, no further record has been found of the church after 1850.

John W. Hendrick gave five acres of land to the Pilgrim's Rest Primitive Baptist Church in 1850. Unfortunately, the clerk who recorded the conveyance, Cloud T. Barton, made an error in recording the land description. However, Hendrick almost certainly gave a small portion of his farm to the church, and so the church probably lay in Sections 26 or 27, Township 22 North, Range 1 West. This is the region between the Cherry Ridge Road and Highway 15, located between Farmerville and Spearsville, some eight or ten miles north/northwest of Farmerville. All of the men involved in this donation lived in this same vicinity—within a few miles of each other on the

south/southeast side of Cherry Ridge. Thus, there can be no doubt that the church lay in this same vicinity.

The record showing John W. Hendrick's donation of five acres to the church is recorded in Union Parish Conveyance Book D, pp. 158-159. We can see evidence of the strong feelings that this mission vs. anti-mission conflict generated among those involved in the wording of the deed:

*The State of Louisiana* }  
*Parish of Union* }

*Know all men by these presents that I **John W. Hendrick** a citizen of the aforesaid Parish as well as for the respect I bear of the redumus [sic] Earthly Kingdom as for the Spread and prosperity of the Same give Grant and bequeath unto the Primitive Baptist Church called Pilgrim's Rest in the afforsaid [sic] Parish the following described tract or parcel of Land Situated in Said Parish...commencing at the point when the Public Road known as the Mathews Road now crosses the branch known as the Rabun or Meeting House branch...containing five acres be the same more or less to have and to hold the Same together with all and singular the privileges and appurtenances to the Said tract or parcel of Land to the only proper use and benefit and advantage of the said Pilgrim's Rest Church So long as she Remains as a church of her present faith against the Claim of me my Heirs and assigns and against all other claims in witness whereof I have hereunto Subscribed my name in the presence of **James Taylor, Edmund Hayes, and John T. Mathews** on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of March 1850...*

attest:

**Edmund Hayes**

**James Taylor**

**John T. Mathews**

**John W. Hendrick**



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## Men Associated with Pilgrim's Rest Primitive Baptist Church

Without any church minutes, we cannot say for certain who belonged to Pilgrim's Rest Church. However, the record above indicates that John W. Hendrick, James Taylor, Edmund Hayes, and John T. Matthews belonged to the church. All four of these men lived near each other on the south/southeast side of the village of Cherry Ridge. Moreover, it seems very likely that Edmund Hayes and John T. Matthews were deacons in the church. James Taylor, known to have been a Primitive Baptist minister, probably served the church as pastor and may have also belonged to the church. More information on these four men is given below:

### John W. Hendrick

A native of South Carolina, John William Hendrick (12 Oct 1801–1867) moved to Union Parish from Mississippi in the mid-1840s with his wife, Sarah Elizabeth Powe (5 Aug 1808–1875), and their children. By 1844, they had settled a few miles southeast of Cherry Ridge, in north/central Union Parish Louisiana. Between 1850 and 1856, Hendrick moved his family south, across the parish line into what was then Jackson Parish. They had settled near the Unionville community by late 1856, for one of the Hendricks' sons was buried in the Unionville Cemetery in December 1856.

John W. Hendrick died there in 1867. His widow, Sarah, still lived in this vicinity in 1870, but she died in 1875. The region in which they lived was Jackson Parish until 1873, when it became Lincoln Parish. Sarah E. Hendrick has a tombstone marker in the Salem Cemetery, located near the modern village of Dubach.



### Elder James Taylor

Born in Hancock County, Georgia, James Taylor (5 Feb 1795–31 Oct 1858) was the son of William Taylor and Catherine Gray. The Taylors moved to Putnam County, Georgia region by about 1806 or 1807, and then on to Butler County, Alabama in 1818. The Taylors were Baptists, with many of James' family members joining the Pigeon Creek Baptist Church in Butler County in the early 1820s. James Taylor became a Primitive Baptist minister, but like others in his family, he farmed for a living.

Taylor's younger brother, Judge John Taylor, and sister, Sarah Taylor Deanes, moved west to northern Louisiana in the latter 1830s, leaving James and their other siblings in central Alabama.

James' brothers, Alexander M. and William B. Taylor, and sister, Permelia Taylor Gilbert, all left Lowndes County in about 1841 and moved to Union Parish, Louisiana. William Taylor, Permelia Taylor Gilbert, and their nephew, Allen J. Futch, all settled a few miles south/southeast of the village of Cherry Ridge, in the north/central portion of the parish. This region is the precise location of the Pilgrim's Rest Primitive Baptist Church.

It appears that James Taylor remained in Alabama later than his siblings, until the mid- or latter 1840s, when he followed them to Union Parish, Louisiana. He did not own any real estate in 1850, but about 1851 he purchased an 80-acre tract located a few miles south of Cherry Ridge, near the farms of his relatives. His land also lay near the Pilgrim's Rest Primitive Baptist Church.

James Taylor served as the pastor of Liberty Hill Primitive Baptist Church located about six miles northeast of Farmerville adjoining the farm of his brother, Judge John Taylor. This was about ten miles east of Cherry Ridge.



### **Edmund Hayes**

A native of Georgia, Edmund Hayes (9 Jul 1805–30 Jul 1882) married on 20 January 1833 in Bibb County, Alabama to Alpha Woolley (22 Jul 1815–8 Mar 1871). In the latter 1840s, the Hayes family left Bibb County, Alabama and settled a few miles south of Cherry Ridge, Union Parish, Louisiana. Between about 1847 and 1850, Hayes purchased a total of 240 acres of government land located a few miles south of Cherry Ridge near the farms of Taylor and Hendrick. Edmund Hayes and his family farmed there in 1850. Between about 1857 and 1860, the Hayes left Union Parish and moved northwest to Columbia County, Arkansas. Edmund and his family settled in Magnolia, and he worked as a merchant in 1860.

Between 1860 and 1870, Edmund moved his family west again, and they lived in Henderson County, Texas in 1870. Edmund's wife, Alpha Woolley, died in 1871, and within a few years he moved back to Union Parish, Louisiana. This time, he settled near Spearsville, where his son, Basil V. Hayes lived.

On 13 November 1875, Edmund Hayes presented his letter of dismissal from a Primitive Baptist Church in Elm Ridge, Texas to the New Hope Primitive Baptist in Spearsville. The minutes of the church conference that day show that the church accepted Hayes as a member:

*After divine service by Elder H. B. Howard the church went into conference...open the door of the church Bro. Deacon E. Hays presented A letter from Elm Ridge Texas. The letter being Read and satisfactory Bro. Hays was rec'd. into the fellowship of the church...*

As an ordained deacon, Hayes served New Hope Church as the moderator of church conferences, as association delegate, etc., suggesting that he had served as deacon in a Primitive Baptist church for many years. Edmund Hayes remarried about 1875 to Milley Greer (1818–1904), the widow of Louis Raborn (1818–1867). Edmund Hayes died on 30 July 1882 and is buried in the Bethel Cemetery near Spearsville, where Milley's first husband was buried.



### **John Thompson Mathews**

A native of Alabama, John T. Mathews (31 Jan 1819–27 Jan 1895) was the son of John Mathews and Elizabeth Harris. He was a brother-in-law to Elder James Taylor, in that John's sister, Winifred Mathews, married Taylor's brother, Alexander M. Taylor. John T. Mathews married Lydia Moseley on 12 January 1837 in Montgomery County, Alabama.

John T. Mathews moved to the Cherry Ridge vicinity in the early 1840s with his relatives. Between 1852 and 1859, he bought several tracts of government land located about one mile east of Cherry Ridge. By 1860, Mathews had a house full of daughters, but no sons who had survived infancy. He registered to vote in 1867 as a resident of Union Parish, but apparently, in the latter 1860s, Mathews left Cherry Ridge and moved to Hempstead County, Arkansas. In 1880, Mathews and his family lived in Nevada County, Arkansas, formed in 1871 from a portion of Hempstead County. John T. Mathews was buried with his first wife, Lydia, in the Mt. Ephesus Cemetery in Nevada County, Arkansas.

