## The Zion Presbyterian Church

Written by Jennifer Nodwell Thursday, 09 September 2010 04:35 - Last Updated Thursday, 09 September 2010 07:10



Between 1705 and 1775, persecution, drought, and famine drove 500,000 Scotch Presbyterians from North Ireland to America. Many of these immigrants found their way to South Carolina in the Williamsburg District. They laid off a town and named it Kingstree. These devout Presbyterians busied themselves organizing churches there and in adjoining settlements. The church in Kingstree was formally organized in August, 1736. Among these Scotch-Irish immigrants were our Dickey ancestors, who sailed to South Carolina in 1772.

The Reverend Samuel Kennedy, a native of Ireland, came as minister of Williamsburg church in 1782. He openly denied the divinity of Christ and ultimately split the church. The orthodox minority destroyed the church building and reorganized under the name of Bethel. In 1803, they completed and occupied a new house of worship one mile east of Kingstreet. One of the pastors of Bethel was Reverend James White Stephson, D.D., a veteran of the Revolutionary War, who would later become the first pastor of Zion Presbyterian Church.

On March 25, 1805, a group of four families headed by Moses B. Frierson, James Armstrong, James Blakely, and Paul Fulton from the Bethel Congregation left Williamsburg for Nashville, Tennessee. They arrived on May 8, and in the following fall settled in the area of Franklin, Williamson County, Tennessee where they rented temporary lodging for themselves and their friends who would arrive a bit later. On March 6, 1806, another group of ten families left for Franklin. John Dickey led the second group of families and later served as a magistrate at the first court in Maury County, Tennessee. Other families in this second wave were headed by Mrs. Margaret Frierson, Mrs. Jeannette Blakely, Samuel Frierson, Thomas Stephenson, William Frierson, William J. Frierson, Samuel Witherspoon, Elias Frierson, Mrs. Mary Fleming, and John W. Stephenson. Once arrived, these families called a meeting of this society of Presbyterians and decided on the most satisfactory place to purchase land and make a permanent settlement.

The majority was in favor of purchasing land on Duck or Elk River. It was ultimately decided to try to purchase a portion of the 25,000 acres originally granted to General Nathaniel Greene by the State of North Carolina for his services in the Revolutionary War. The land was presently held by his heirs. George Dickey (son of John Dickey) was chosen as a messenger to go to Cumberland Island at the mouth of St. Mary's River in the souteast tip of Georgia to petition the heirs on behalf of the community to purchase a portion of General Greene's land. They agreed to the sale, and in August of 1807, the settlers purchased eight square miles (5,120 acres) in

## The Zion Presbyterian Church

Written by Jennifer Nodwell Thursday, 09 September 2010 04:35 - Last Updated Thursday, 09 September 2010 07:10

the southwest corner of the tract of land. They agreed on a price of \$15,360.

According to a statement by W.J. Armstrong, "Greene's folks supposed the South Carolina emigrants (then in Williamson County) had but little money, possibly enough to make a small payment, and then through default, the land would be forfeited and revert to Greene. Payment was tendered here but demanded to be made at Savannah, Georgia where Greene had been given a large estate by Georgia and South Carolina. George Dickey was selected to take the money to Savannah. Dickey was a great fiddler and loved his dram. He put the money in one side of his saddle bags, a big jug of whiskey on the other side, the fiddle in a sack on his back. His route lay through Indian country. Many of the Indians were unfriendly and there was no road, only a trail. Dickey was bid good-bye by the whole settlement, many not expecting to see him again. The Indians not soothed by the fiddling were captivated by the drams of whiskey. He made the trip safe and paid the money all right."

About the first of September in 1807, a number of the society went to their newly purchased lands to build temporary homes so that they could move there before winter. Old Mr. John Dickey (1740-1808) was among those who prepared for the move but before he could, he died of influenza. The history of the Zion Congregation states that he died on 11 January, 1808. The men of the community cleared the land and erected a log house as near the center of the eight acres as they could and there built a log cabin for a house of worship.

They chose the name Zion for their new community and their new church. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was celebrated for the first time at Zion in August 1809 with 54 communicants. The first regular Sunday School was organized in 1810.

The second church building was completed in the spring of 1813. The third and present building was occupied on April 7, 1849. The education building was completed and dedicated in 1973 and the Brown-Fulton Building, a fellowship hall and classrooms shared with Zion Christian Academy, was opened in October 1991.

There has been a worshipping church on this site, without interruption, through the Civil War and the major wars of this century, from 1807 until present day. Zion was among the first churches to leave the liberal Presbyterian Church to join the newly-formed conservative Presbyterian Church in America in 1973. Zion is also the "mother church" of several Presbyterian churches. Among them are College Hill Church, College Hill, Mississippi; Zion Church, Milam, Texas; and Concord Church, Akron, Alabama.

## **The Zion Presbyterian Church**

Written by Jennifer Nodwell Thursday, 09 September 2010 04:35 - Last Updated Thursday, 09 September 2010 07:10

Information taken from Zion Presbyterian Church website and the From Antrim... Dickey book.