

FILE

The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland
(formerly: Baptist Historical Society of Qld Newsletter)

No. 48 April 2001

CELEBRATING 150 YEARS

Baptist work began in Brisbane in mid-1855 when Rev Charles Smith arrived and gathered a number of Baptists with services he conducted. Several of these were prominent business people who had already made their mark on the community. Those who had been here for a few years had been part of the United Evangelical Church established by Baptist minister, Rev Charles Stewart who arrived on the 'Fortitude' in 1849. When he left at the end of 1854, the various denominational groups in it were ready to form their own separate fellowship.

The Baptists met informally for a few weeks under the dramatic ministry of Smith, and then formed a church on August 5th - known first as Brisbane Baptist Church, and later as Wharf Street church. Under the leadership of its second minister, Rev B.G. Wilson, this church grew strongly and became a great centre for outreach and evangelism in Brisbane and far beyond, becoming the mother church of Baptists in Queensland.

In only a short time, it will be the 150th anniversary of what is now known as the City Tabernacle Baptist Church, and with it the Baptist denomination in this state. The Baptist Historical Society has met recently with representatives of the City Tabernacle and the Baptist Union to discuss plans for celebrations of this event in 2005. It is expected that the City Tabernacle will arrange for a number of activities leading up to main celebration in early August, after which the focus will switch to the denominational level. Watch for future developments. This is good opportunity to commemorate 150 and more years of blessing, but also to discover and document what has happened, and to reflect on trends and developments, at both local church and the denominational levels. It is hoped that there will be significant opportunities for research and analysis of our heritage as part of this sesqui-centenary.

The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland

(est. 1984)

Membership (2000)

Individual \$8 p.a. Family \$12 p.a. Corporate \$20 p.a.

Qld Baptist Forum 3 issues p.a.

Free to Members Others \$2 each posted

President: Mr Eric W. Kopittke

98 Yallambee Rd., Jindalee 4074 Phone 3376 4339

Secretary: Dr Ken G. Smith,

110 White St, Graceville 4075 Phone 3379 6117

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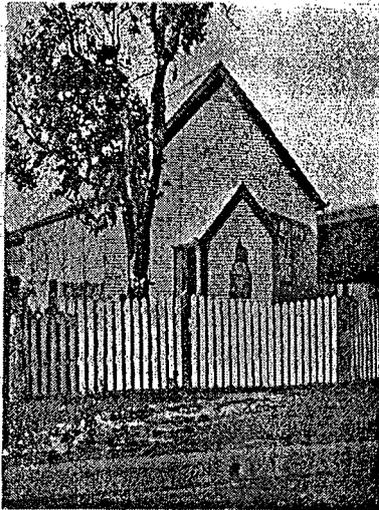
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ROCKHAMPTON BAPTIST CHURCH

Reproduced from *The Queensland Baptist* Sept 1900 p 119

We continue the reproduction of a series of articles on early Baptist churches in Queensland which appeared in *The Queensland Baptist*. These articles present some interesting details of the churches and buildings. One of the features of the original series was a photograph of the church with each article. Recent pictures of these churches will also be shown where available.



Original Church Building

Our illustration this month is the second oldest building in Queensland still in use as a Baptist Church [at the time of writing]. On the 25th of June, 1862 the Baptist Church in Rockhampton was formed, and consisted of seven (7) members - with one exception, members of the Bathurst Street Church, Sydney. Meetings were held once every Lord's Day at the house of Mr. W. H. Buzacott, in Alma Street. These meetings were well attended, and ultimately the Rev. Josiah Hinton was invited to take the pastorate of the church in the latter part of 1863. Matters progressed, and steps were taken to secure a site for a church building, finally resulting in the purchase of the site on which the existing church building was erected in 1864, involving an expenditure of over £800.

It is not our present intention to write a history of the church, but we may mention that the pastorate has been occupied successively by Revs. J. Hinton, T. l'Erson, G. Slade, E. Tucker, J. Glover, E. R. Makin, and the present pastor, Rev. T. Vigis. In 1896, during the pastorate of the late Rev. E. R. Makin, the building was renovated at a cost of about £100. Incandescent lighting was installed, and the Ladies' Sewing Circle attended to the vestry and platform improvements. Although externally a truly old-fashioned style of building, it is of the old style also in being very substantial, and with a renovated interior is a comfortable building, accommodating some 215 worshippers. We hope our friends may so prosper that a new and larger building may soon be a necessity.



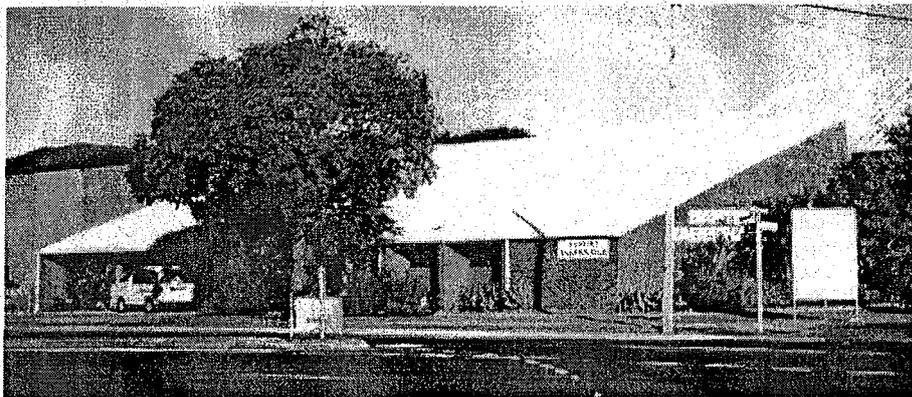
1962 Building



1922 Building

As the original article above hoped, Rockhampton Church did need a larger building - in fact it has occupied a number of them over the years - and has just moved again to a new side in a fast growing suburban site. These illustrations show some of those buildings.

1977 Building



THE GERMAN BAPTIST CHURCH AT ZILLMAN WATERHOLES

Melvin Williams

The earliest stages of the German Baptist witness in Queensland, before the establishment of the churches out from Ipswich, has long been a mystery. This article by BHSQ member, Melvin Williams, clears up many of the details and sets out the fascinating events and movements that occurred north of Brisbane in those years and laid the foundation for the remarkable developments that were to follow later for the German Baptist community.

There has always been an air of mystery about this church of the 1860's and 1870's. It was known to be an important staging camp for some German migrants on arrival in Brisbane and before moving north, west, or south, to take up land grants. Yet little was known to those studying Queensland Baptist church history. Who were its leaders and where in Zillmere as the suburb later became known was it located?

The story begins following the failure of the Gossner Mission at Nundah. A number of the lay missionaries turned to farming to provide a living. In this they were very successful, with their children following in their footsteps. Nearby land was absorbed into a larger German Station (as the mission area was known) where their farms produced rough-leaf pineapples and where their dairy milk, cream and rich home-made butter was enough to supply the Station and hawk to Brisbane town.

While the majority of the settlers were Lutherans, some held more to Free Church views and so welcomed the Methodists whose earliest service was conducted in 1847. The original mission chapel was replaced in 1853. In his history of Methodism in Nundah, the Rev G W Pittenrigh notes "Early Queensland Methodism owed a lot to the German settlers who as local preachers and church officers rendered splendid service. The names of Messrs Zillman, Gericke, Gerler and Niquet figure prominently in those years, Mr Zillman being the circuit steward of the Brisbane Circuit in 1858." Later that year newly arrived Baptist minister, the Rev B G Wilson, conducted a service and the following year baptised a number of the children of the original missionaries. The names Zillman, Franz, Rode and Gerler are all subsequently listed on the membership roll of the Wharf Street church. So from 1860 there is a Baptist congregation meeting in the undenominational chapel in German station as an outstation of the Wharf Street church. In 1863 the chapel was acquired for Baptist worship with baptisms being in the building rather than in Kedron Brook.

In 1865 and again in 1867 large migrations from Germany occurred. These people came initially, many of them, to German Station to fraternise and exchange information, until they moved out, taking advantage of the government allocation of ten acres per person. A number were Baptists and under lay leader

Heinrich Falkenhagen the church prospered. But many of the new arrivals were unhappy with aspects of the Wharf Street church with which the work was associated. In Germany they were used to a more exclusive membership. So in 1868 they withdrew to form an independent church. But the exodus which began about 1867 soon became a flood. An influenza epidemic in 1869 also extracted a deadly toll.

Shortly afterwards the membership was reduced to such a small number the work could not be sustained. In 1874 the remaining trustees moved the building to a new site at Hendra where they hoped a new church would develop. Though there was a Sunday School and other occasional meetings it was not till June 1888 that the church there was formed. Among those who formed the initial membership were some names harking back to the original German Mission: Mr and Mrs Franz and three daughters, Mr and Mrs and Miss Gerler, and Mr J. L. Zillman.

In many ways the work at 'The Waterhole' mirrored in a smaller way that at German Station proper. It originated in this way. Johan Zillman and others, following a two-day sale of Crown land on the 9 and 10 November 1853 purchased fertile land near 'The Waterhole'. Years before, in 1841, tracking down some cattle which had escaped through the fence, Zillman had discovered the Waterhole and the fertile area about it. This fact was well-known and the area about it was later known as Zillman's Waterholes. The land was bought from the original land-owners and broken up and sold to settlers at German Station. Here the various German families worked their farms and prospered. Produce was sold at German Station, sometimes in Brisbane or else hawked around residents who were not farmers. With the development of Sandgate as the seaside resort of property owners, a further and better market for their produce was assured.

During the early part of the 1860's, the church was relatively stable, based as it was on farming families. It was an outreach from the Baptist church at German Station being made up initially of those who found the journey there too far, together with those from the Nudgee area who found transport easier to 'The Waterhole' than to Nundah. Its status was that of an 'assembly' to use their word, in conjunction with

the German Station church, for whom it partially relied on for preachers. For a while they met in a small bark hall but later moved to meeting in homes.

The migration wave of the latter part of the 60's decade previously referred to, affected the small church in a similar manner. The letter printed in the box below is of interest as it mentions the names of some of the early leaders and indicates that the church was rapidly losing its leadership, including some of the new wave of arrivals. Three family names are given, Lamprecht, Dau and Kratz. Mr G Fisher was a member of Wharf Street church. With many of the other German arrivals, he had difficulty with the open communion stance of the church. In the history of the Baptist Union, Rev John White says that Fisher withdrew from Wharf Street in 1872 but was readmitted the following year, agreeing to give his full attention to the work at German Station. The name of Lamprecht occurs frequently among the German churches. The family comprising Ludwig and Justine with children Zuliene (6), Wilhelmine (3) and baby Ludwig arrived on the 'Susanne Godeffroy' which arrived in Brisbane in 1865. Ludwig's brother Johann Christian followed out later also settling in what came to be known as 'Lamprecht's Hill'- the site

second exodus of people who moved away to Rosewood Scrub. A year later the membership was eleven.

Among other passengers on the 'Susanne Godeffroy' was the Fischer family which was to play a key role in church at Zillman Waterholes as they settled in that area rather than move further away. Through the 1870's and into the 80's the key figures are three men - Carl Fischer, an outstanding leader, and two English settlers Thomas Geraghty and Joseph Walsh Lee.

CARL MARTIN FREDERIK FISCHER

Johann (40), his wife Dorothea (36), Carl (9) and August (3), (baby Marie had died during the voyage) were earnest Lutherans from Saxony. Johann was a lay preacher, intense and devout. Carl was clearly following in his steps. At German Station they were drawn to Baptist services and in 1869 Johann, Dorothea and Carl were baptised. After attending a Baptist meeting in Brisbane Carl heard the call to spread the Gospel, to teach and to preach. At a mere 14 years of age he began organising worship at Zillman Waterhole. He arranged meetings with

Brisbane 29th October 1871

The first chapel was opened on the 15th of October, about 8 English miles from Brisbane. Brothers and sisters came from near and far, yes many from 50 miles away, the members of those gathered was at least 100. It ended with a love meal. Br Lamprecht opened the service with a hearty address, thereat Br Dau and Br Kratz succeeded him. The first two brothers have long cared for the congregation as leaders. They had shifted from here to beyond Ipswich, but they still show love by visiting us. Br Kratz is now leader. May the Lord strengthen him, that by his words also more may come to a knowledge of the truth.

Part of a letter sent by G Fischer, "The Pottery" Brisbane, to J G Onken, Leader of Baptists in Germany, and published in the German Baptist Magazine *Das Mission Blatt*. Translated by G Roberts.)

of the present Geebung State School. There they planted fruit trees and also kept a horse, a cow, and a few fowls. But it was not good land and they moved to Hagslea in 1870 where 'Christy' became the first leader of the new church at Marburg. The Marburg church history records that by 1876 when the church membership had reached 113, 19 of these were transferred from Zillman Waterholes. They include the name of Kratz who must have moved shortly after the church opening.

Meanwhile the church had been reconstituted the previous Sunday, 8 October 1871, with a service, due to the lead taken by the Fischer family, recent arrivals to the area. Later events show that it adopted a Particular Baptist Church approach with its stricter type membership. The initial membership was about fifty. But almost immediately there occurred the

English Baptists in the area including Geraghty and Lee. The church was officially formed with a trust deed and trustees appointed. He preached at the first official service on 8 October in German to a congregation of between fifty and sixty. The congregation was mainly from the Zillmere area, but a few came from Nudgee German Station or the farms in between.

But almost immediately there was the second and larger exodus as scrub lands along the upper reaches of the Brisbane River were thrown open, ostensibly for cotton growing (which was a failure). The big attraction was the area between Fernvale and Lowood. They called the movement 'a Rosewood fever that swept through like a flu'. Only five people were left in the German Station congregation, eleven in the Zillman Waterhole congregation, and only five

members remained in Nudgee where there had been thirty. Carl Fischer went to Rosewood for a short time but returned. He again took the leadership and the bulk of the preaching. The church grew by conversions. When 20 he was confident in preaching in English and at 21 he was licenced to marry. He is described as a most dynamic personality although quiet on the surface. If anything of importance was going on in any of the churches, he would be there. He would travel long distances to marry people for there were few ministers available. He instituted a Sunday School and preached with ardour on behalf of Temperance especially when a Temperance Hall was built later. He also lectured against the use of Pacific Island labour.

On 2 December he married Ellen Robinson, the fourth child of Mr and Mrs John Robinson, of Banyo. They settled into a modest cottage on the slope of a hill south west of the little slab church. Entry was up a gradual incline off Robinson's Road, later called Fischer's Parade. The following year Nurse Clayton, a neighbour was summonsed for the birth of a girl, Lottie Cassiope. The next year there was a boy, James Johann, followed by Mona Mabel Marge, Rosabel May, David Ewers, George, Stabenow and Ambrose. The latter two died young.

There was of course in the 1870's informal association between the several German Baptist churches which existed at the time. In 1876 the annual conference of the 'South Queensland German Baptist Union' was held at Mt Walker. Five churches were represented. The Waterhole church reported a membership of fifteen, though the congregation would be larger than that. It was a German church but English was increasingly the language being used.

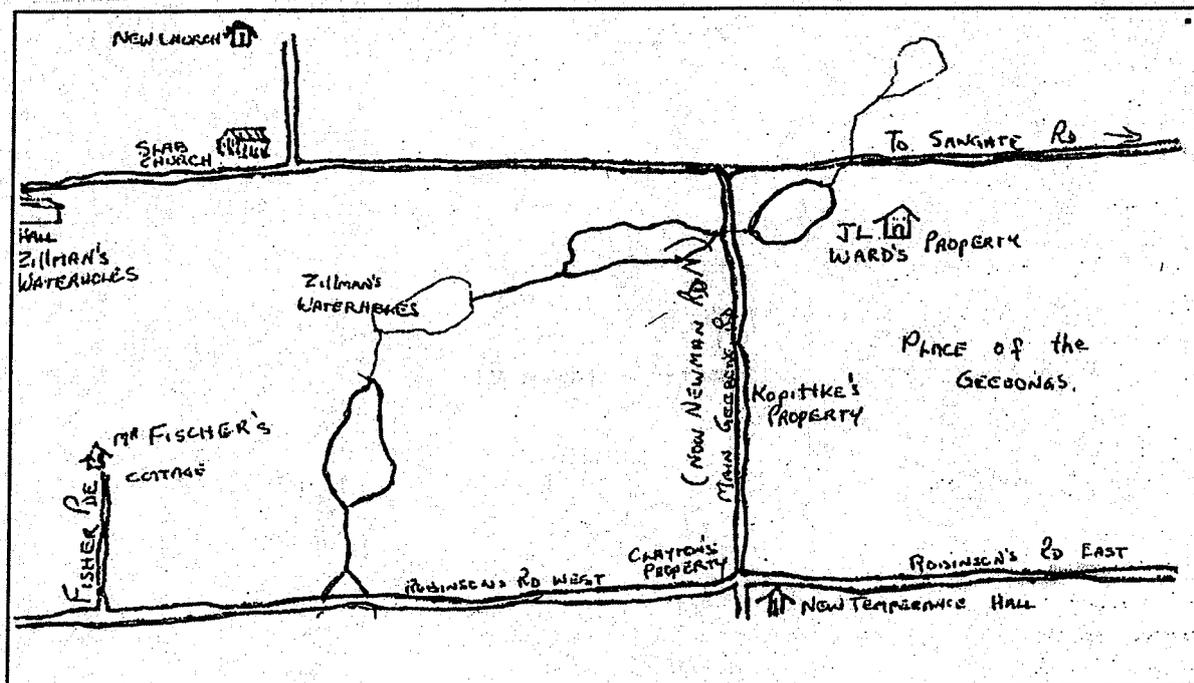
In 1881 a decision was made to change from the use of German to English language. This was not done by a simple decision but by a re-formation of the church as English-speaking with just eight members, though conversions continued as did Sunday School and Band of Hope (Temperance) meetings. The tenth anniversary of the church was celebrated on the 11 October that year. The chapel was filled for the occasion. All three leaders participated. Mr Geraghty led the singing by the children. Mr Lee made a statement about the purpose of the meeting and Carl Fischer described the beginning of the work and his struggles at learning the English language so as to be able to preach in it. Addresses were given by Revs C. O. Cox (Wesleyan) and J. Downing (Baptist) as an enjoyable evening came to a close. But all that was to change the following year.

THOMAS GERAGHTY

Not much is known about this man who was to serve as Carl Fischer's right-hand man for most of his life. He must have been a young man when the church was formed in 1871 as his death occurred on 11 March 1932. He is described as Carl Fischer's brother-in-law so he must have married another of John Robinson's daughters. Later he became a teacher and still later in 1883 was transferred to Gowrie Junction near Toowoomba.

JOSEPH WALSH LEE

Joseph arrived in Queensland on the 'Golden City' with his wife Jane and daughters Elizabeth (11) and Margaret (9). He was a man of substance, a



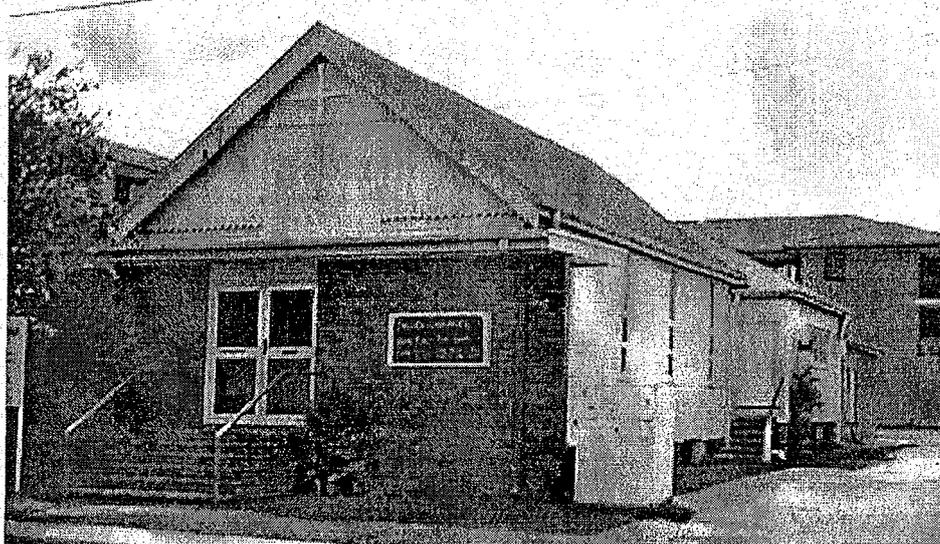
Lancashire Cotton Company man. He was commissioned by the Government as manager of a vast Pimpana Plantation, with another twenty acres of cotton at Coomera. For what ever reason in 1867 he arrived in the Zillman Waterhole area, having purchased 183 acres of land in the parish of Kedron, including some cultivated with cotton and some with pineapples in what is now the central part of Zillmere, between Zillmere and Beams Roads. Soon most of his farm was devoted to pineapples and was referred to by others as 'the pineapple farm'. When J. C. Hutton began his bacon factory he adopted the Pineapple brand name. Pineapple Street which ran down the left-hand side of his property still exists today, although the Sandgate railway cut through in 1882 divided his property. His main other interest centred around the need for a school in the area. On 15 November 1875 a committee of four was formed, with John Luke Ward, the local brickyard owner as chairman, Lee as secretary, and Carl Stabe newly arrived from Caboolture as treasurer. Lee was also a member of the Toombul Divisional Board of the Parish of Nundah. His main aim was to do something about 'that Sandgate Road'. German Station was a halfway house between Brisbane and Sandgate and a supply centre by road for both Ward and Lee. Lee had a house described as 'befitting his station' of handmade bricks, double thickness, cool in summer and warm in winter. His two daughters played the piano, one exceedingly well becoming the local piano teacher. In 1880 Lee was appointed a Justice of the Peace. Lee was a deacon of the church.

Then in August 1882 there occurred a remarkable event-the seduction of the church by two Church of Christ evangelists - a pattern that was to repeat itself among other established German Baptist churches in Queensland. The Churches of Christ originated from a group of Baptists in Scotland, their views being later propagated by Alexander Campbell. Originally known as

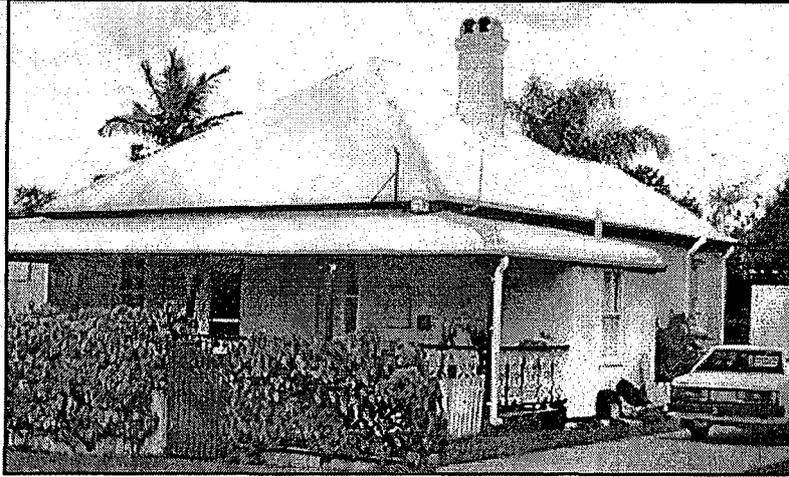
Campbellites they were later known as Churches of Christ. They emphasised 'the restoration of New Testament Christianity' rather literally and selectively interpreted. So they chose scriptural names for their churches pleading with others to do the same, emphasised the Lord's Supper being observed weekly, and baptism being part of the salvation process and therefore essential.

The sanitised version of events reads like this. Two Church of Christ evangelists, Stephen Cheek (who had been evangelising in Victoria) and F. L. Troy (from Queensland) were invited to conduct an evangelistic mission. Mr Troy was known to Mr Geraghty. The Gospel was proclaimed on 1 August (this being later claimed as the first Church of Christ sermon preached in Queensland) and subsequently, with 16 people being immersed in a nearby waterhole. Both Carl Fischer and Thomas Geraghty were won over to the views proclaimed. Mr Cheek then conducted communion on the following Sunday, welcoming in as members those baptised during the week. After establishing that the leaders and most of the church were convinced of the new doctrines and failing to persuade them otherwise, they were expelled by the remaining members. Consequently on the 23rd of August the majority of the congregation together with other converts of the mission formed the first church in Queensland known as Church of Christ. Members included Mr and Mrs Fischer Snr, Mr and Mrs Lohde, and Mr and Mrs Straats. Other names are lost but later include the wealthy Carl Stabe who was to be very generous to Church of Christ causes. For ten years the Zillmere Church of Christ worshipped in the old German Baptist building until they built and opened their first chapel on 24 May 1894.

A somewhat different version of what occurred is contained in a letter to the *Queensland Freeman* (Aug 1882) by J. W. Lee. The letter was written on the 7



Zillmere Church of Christ



Joseph Walsh Lee's house today

August just halfway through the mission. After stating that the church was a small harmonious Baptist church of nine members, two of whom were deacons and conducted the services, the church has been thrown into confusion, the name of the church changed and doctrines taught that the church does not and never did believe. Converts to the evangelist's views were baptised immediately. On the Saturday night, having announced a Bible reading for the newly baptised, Mr Cheek then told them to sit down to the Lord's Supper on the Sunday morning. At the Lord's Supper, which he conducted without any authorisation, he welcomed the converts as members. The Baptist church had now become a Christian church without the members, other than the two leaders, ever having a say or giving the evangelist such authority. He wrote, he said, to sound the note of warning to other churches. Subsequent letters to the *Freeman* failed to take up his main point of the ethics of a visiting evangelist behaving in this way, concentrating on the 'baptism as essential' issue.

In the minutes of the Baptist Association of Queensland Executive, there is an interesting postscript concerning the church building. Lee became a member of the Sandgate church and in 1892 with others restarted services in the Zillmere area. They wrote asking if they could obtain use of the Baptist building now in possession of the Church of Christ. The Baptist Association (Union) found the property to be in trust for Particular Baptists. Lee could not claim to be Particular Baptist. Sandgate legal opinion did not support the Particular Baptist claim. By now the Churches of Christ knew the situation with the building. The correspondence and situation dragged on and personnel involved changed. In September 1893 the Association indicated that they were taking no further action re the property.

Today we would condemn such proselytism. But at that time proselytism was rather rampant. Probably

the Lutherans both at German Station and at Zillman Waterholes saw the Baptist expansion there in the same light. Nevertheless the damage done among the German Baptist churches and the family divisions that occurred cannot be justified as an expression of 'christian unity according to the New Testament'.

Main Works Consulted

Kath Ballard, *Geebong Story*. Published by the author in 1995 (This is a comprehensive work on the early years of Zillmere and Geebung. It has been well researched, principally in the 1960's and 70's using resources that seem to be no longer available having been lost in successive library removals. Unfortunately it is neither indexed nor annotated but does contain much material not available elsewhere.)

John E. White, *A Fellowship of Service. A History of the Baptist Union of Queensland 1877-1977*. (Published by the Baptist Union of Queensland, 1977)

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George Haig, *Venturing in Faith. Churches of Christ in Queensland 100 Years*. Churches of Christ Historical Committee. 1983

David Parker, *The Gregory History of Queensland Baptists* Baptist Historical Society of Queensland. 1995

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The Queensland Freeman. 1881, 1882

Register and Marburg Mail 15 Sept 1922

The Brisbane Courier, various dates

Queensland Baptist Archives - various material.

From our Heritage

The Queensland Freeman (predecessor of *The Queensland Baptist*) printed the following editorial in the Oct 1887 issue, just ten years after the formation of the Baptist Association (or Union) of Queensland. It makes interesting reading now in light of the recent changes to our denominational structures, approved by the 2001 Half Yearly Assembly. We are now to be known as "Queensland Baptists" which is/are a movement committed "to growing healthy churches", with a goal of 75% being healthy within five years. It is interesting to speculate what the writer of this editorial would have made of the Triennial Report! (Responses to this question are welcome!)

On Associations

The annual meetings that are drawing nigh furnish an opportunity for saying a few words on the purposes of our Association.

First, *it is an Association for work*. A minister asked one day 'what the Association had done for his Church.' He was rightly met with the reply that the Church was joined with others for the purpose of helping, and not for the purpose of being helped. The Association is formed as its constitution declares for work on prescribed lines. Its duties are to help weak Churches, to plant Churches where they are needed, and in every way to extend the kingdom of CHRIST in the colony by denominational agencies. For this purpose monies have to be raised and liabilities to be undertaken—plans have to be thought out, and endeavours made to carry them into execution. All this involves work and the Executive Committee have the burden upon its shoulders after the assembled ministers and delegates, as representatives of the Churches, have given them sanction and commission for the work.

It follows from the above that the *Association is one of common responsibility*. When once the committee is empowered to do work every associated Church in proportion to its ability is bound to help—whether it be by money, labour, or counsel. This bond cannot be put into legal form, but because it cannot it is all the more binding. It is moral and spiritual. It involves fidelity to undertakings, loyalty to our brethren, and service for Christ. Any Church has the liberty to go out, that is after obligations incurred with its sanction have been met - not before - but while it is in the Association it ought cheerfully to recognise its joint responsibility. But this responsibility does not authorise control as to the method in which Churches shall do their work and fulfil their pecuniary obligations. One Church may prefer to do it one way, another in some other way. If all agree on one common plan then all must abide by it. For instance, it has been agreed that every associated Church should make a collection for the Association funds once a year; that is a specific moral obligation and should be met. Outside this a Church is at liberty to raise funds in any way it deems best. Bazaars, personal subscriptions, musical soirees, and ten thousand and one ways might be adopted; that is a matter for the Church to decide, so long as it raises its proportionate share of the funds required.

The *Association is one of equality*. The constitution provides for the constituent Churches. According to the numbers, so is the representation up to a certain point. Beyond that point it is not wise to go, else it would mean swamping the other constituencies—that is recognised in the Association. Representation in proportion to numbers merely would be unwise, so would it be if contributions were made the basis only. For instance, one Church has raised out of £13,500 for a Baptist Fund no less than £8,000. A splendid effort. But suppose this Church said "We have raised three-fifths of the money, and now must have three-fifths of the control, and the remaining two-fifths shall fall to the 29 other contributing Churches. What would the effect be? Why the other Churches would feel reduced to nonentities, and their representation would be a nullity. Hence some limitation of representation is wise. What the limit ought be will vary according to circumstances. When the representatives meet they are on an equal footing, and their influence will differ from other considerations—such as ability, piety and active habits and business capacity rather than from anything else. Thus ministers and delegates coming from a remote and small Church have, by virtue of their position, rights just the same as those who represent the larger Churches. This fact ought to weigh with our smaller Churches and lead them to take greater interest in Association work.

Finally, *the Association is a fraternity*. Brotherly love, kindly forbearance, and a wish to do the best service for our common LORD, are, we believe, the characteristics our Association. Discussions may wax warm, and feelings for a little while, be ruffled—but that is only for a brief moment. The unreasoning opposition and the mulish obstinacy to be seen in some places of debate are excluded from our Association and must ever be. The spirit of Christ and of gentleness will be found all-sufficient for our work and the more this is cultivated the more successful will our Association be.