

SOULE CHAPEL CHURCH

I count it a very great privilege; that the pastor has assigned the honor to me of writing a brief history of Soule Chapel Church. Brief it will be of the original church; for the records are scarce. I am indebted to Rev. J. B. Cain, Historian of the M. E. Conference, also the Meridian Library and some old family bibles for the information I have. Hope to give you something fairly authentic.

At the Alabama Conference, composed of Presiding Elders, pastors and delegates from East Mississippi, and West Alabama; meeting at Montgomery, Alabama, in 1839, a circuit was formed, called the Lauderdale Mission. The first Soule Chapel Church was placed on this Lauderdale Mission. The mission was named for Lauderdale County. About 1854 the church was established 4 miles East of the present building, on land owned by John Clayton. He probably donated the ground for the church. John W. Ellis was the first pastor.

The church was named for Bishop Soule, a native of Maine, who came to preside over the New Orleans Conference in 1846; That conference included West Miss. and Louisiana. Bishop Soule became very popular with the people at that time. He loved the people and visited among them. He served as a missionary, preaching Christianity and Methodism throughout both conferences. He remained in the South until after the Civil War, but died in his native state in 1867.

The names of the ones who did the drudgery of establishing and financing the church are scarce. Not much money was needed, but enormous amount of sweat and toil to build the log church. Rev. Hitt, a local preacher, seems to be one of the faithful ones that managed affairs; after Bishop Soule gave suggestions, advice and spiritual aid. The Clayton, Moore and Hitt families were most active in all lines of work and planning.

The old log church survived the bloody Civil War and Sherman's raid. We do not have any record of services being held after the Civil War until 1866. In that year Rev. James Gann held service. The parsonage was at DeKalb and on the DeKalb Circuit. Rev. Gann had a circuit of over 150 miles in area. He made this circuit on horse back, and returned to preach at Soule Chapel once within two