

The Methodist Church at Cedar Bayou, 1844-1870,¹ by Chuck Chandler²

The *Cedar Bayou United Methodist Church Sesquicentennial History 1844-1994* says:

Through the early 1840s the burning question was that of annexation to the United States. One of the most famous public discussions of this topic took place at a Fourth of July celebration that was held at the Cedar Bayou church. For this occasion the citizens of the place had prepared for a big barbecue and public speaking, a very popular type of gathering in those Times. All the notables for miles around were invited to the affair. Sam Houston and his guest, Andrew Jackson Donelson, who a few months later became the United States minister to the Texas Republic, were there; Mirabeau B. Lamar was there, as well as other celebrities of the new nation.³

However, this story does not belong to the Baytown area. It was copied verbatim from Amelia Williams' 1935 book *Following General Sam Houston: From 1793 to 1863*.⁴ The chapter in that book was itself copied almost verbatim from *Sixty years on the Brazos; the life and letters of Dr. John Washington Lockhart, 1824-1900*.⁵ "Cedar Creek"⁶ in Lockhart's book was changed to "Cedar Bayou" in Williams' book and assumptions about the church's early history were made based on her error. As a history professor at the University of Texas, Dr. Amelia W. Williams⁷ had worked with Dr. E. C. Barker to transcribe all documents they could find that were signed by Sam Houston. Her reference for that chapter, *Sixty Years on the Brazos*, Chapter XXVII, page 210, places the event at Cedar Creek which was about two miles north of today's Chappell Hill, the home of John Washington Lockhart, who attended the picnic. The keynote speaker was named as Judge Nimrod from Chappell Hill. Nimrod Chappell served as County Judge of Washington County from 1846-1848.⁸ Cedar Creek had been the site of an important Methodist camp meeting in 1843 and was a center for the Texas Methodist Episcopal

¹ Published in the *Heritage Journal*, an annual publication of the Texas United Methodist Historical Society, Volume 17, 2021, p54.

² Member, Harris County Historical Commission.

³ *Cedar Bayou United Methodist Church Sesquicentennial History 1844-1994*, by Louise Devereux Travis, 1996.

⁴ *Following General Sam Houston: From 1793 to 1863*, by Amelia W. Williams and Bernhardt Wall, 1935.

⁵ [*Sixty years on the Brazos; the life and letters of Dr. John Washington Lockhart, 1824-1900*](#), by Mrs. Jonnie Lockhart Wallis in association with Laurance L. Hill, 1930.

⁶ Maps during the 1830s showed the name of the stream as Cedar Creek and that was the name when it was described as the eastern boundary of Harrisburg County. [Telegraph and Texas Register, August 19, 1837, p2](#), By 1845, the name was recognized as Cedar Bayou.

⁷ [Amelia Worthington Williams. TSHA.](#)

⁸ [Washington County, Texas 2018, a Guide to Your County Government](#). Page 43

Church in Texas until the early 1850s.

During the project, Amelia Williams had also transcribed a letter from Sam Houston to H. Stuart of the *Civilian and Gazette*, [Galveston, Tx.], which was reprinted in the *Central Texian*, [Anderson, Tx], September 22, 1855 and specifically names Washington County as the site of the barbeque.⁹

Independence, August 25th, 1855

Dear Sir: ... I will, to illustrate further the character of this witness, relate an incident which occurred at a barbecue on Cedar Creek, in Washington County, Texas, on the 4th of July, 1843. After an oration, delivered by Mr. Nimrod Chappell, Mr. Lamar, in the presence of the American Charge d'Affaires [Andrew Jackson Donelson], arose, and in the course of his speech, ...

It is unknown why she changed “Cedar Creek, in Washington County” to “Cedar Bayou” and her book also incorrectly stated the year as 1844. She transcribed Sam Houston’s letter as 1843 and Lockhart gave the date as 1842 in *Sixty Years on the Brazos*. But the barbeque was actually held on the Fourth of July 1845 because Andrew Jackson Donelson was appointed Chargé d'Affaires to Texas on September 16, 1844 and left Texas on or soon after August 9, 1845.

Even if the event had happened in the Baytown area it could not have been at the location of today’s Cedar Bayou church because there was no church there. The deed from John R. Rhea to Hance Baker, Gilbert Brooks, Harrison McLean, Columbus Wiseman and Edward A. Stocking for the 10 acre Church and Parsonage tract wasn’t drawn up until Apr 25, 1847; almost two years *after* the barbeque. It specified two building projects. One was a parsonage for “the use and benefit of the Ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and their families.” The other was “a place of worship for members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.” It was not filed with Harris County until Oct 6, 1856.¹⁰

The log house claimed by Williams as the first church was actually the 1848 parsonage. By 1860 it was no longer being used as a parsonage and it became the “log church” illustrated in Williams’ book. The first known interment at Cedar Bayou Methodist Cemetery was Sarah

⁹ Regardless of the semantics of Cedar Creek vs Cedar Bayou, Sam Houston specifically stated that the barbeque happened in Washington County. Sam Houston Letter, San Jacinto Museum. Also see Appendix - Houston

¹⁰ HCDB S, p531, John R Rhea et al to Hance Baker, et al. Apr 27, 1847; filed and recorded Oct 6, 1856.

Scudder Hamilton (d. 1850), mother of the circuit preacher,¹¹ indicating that the parsonage was built soon after the deed was written.¹² The property was referred to by other surrounding deeds as the “Parsonage Tract” until after the 1858 church was built,¹³ after which time new surveys began to call it the “Church Tract.”¹⁴

¹¹ “From the T.W. Banner.” [Democratic Telegraph and Texas Register, January 3, 1851, p 3.](#)

¹² Her grave is right next to the parking lot on the south side of the church.
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/19062573/sarah-ellen-hamilton> (cenotaph)

¹³ HCDB O, p550, March 11, 1847, John R Rhea et al to Gilbert Brooks, references “Parsonage Tract”
HCDB Q, p16, February 26, 1852, John R Rhea et al to A.H. Kipp, references “Parsonage Tract”
HCDB 11, p15, March 6, 1855, E.A. Stocking to Rachel Carey, references “Parsonage Tract”
HCDB 11, p17, July 23, 1855, John R Rhea et al to Seth Carey et al, references “Parsonage Tract”

¹⁴ HCDB 7, p510, April 1, 1869, Seth Carey to J. L. Pounds, references “Church Tract.”

THE CHURCH AT CEDAR BAYOU



EDAR BAYOU runs adjacent to Goose Creek, a tributary to Galveston Bay. Along this waterway settlers established their farm homes during the colonial period of Texas history, and the little log house that they built as a place of worship was one of the first Protestant churches to be erected in Texas. Tradesmen and a few farmers built their homes about the church, and, in time, it became the nucleus of a thriving village. Ten miles from the town of Cedar Bayou there is a point of land extending far into the bay that is known as Cedar Point. In 1841, Houston bought this tract of land, and, on the projection that reached farthest into the bay, he established a simple summer home to which he brought his family every summer to enjoy the cool sea-breezes and long swims in the healthful salt waters.

Through the early 1840's the burning question in Texas was that of annexation to the United States. One of the most famous public discussions of this topic took place at a Fourth of July celebration that was held at the Cedar Bayou church. For this occasion the citizens of the place had prepared for a big barbecue and public speaking, a very popular type of gathering in those times. All the notables for miles around were invited to the affair. Sam Houston and his guest, Andrew Jackson Donelson, who a few months later became the United States minister to the Texas Republic, were there; Mirabeau B. Lamar was there, as well as a score of other celebrities of the new nation. Houston, Lamar, and Donelson all made speeches on the great topic of the day.



The first Church of Cedar Bayou, Texas, in which was held a Fourth of July meeting. A barbecue was included. President Houston was present. Collection of Mrs. D. F. Devereaux, Cedar Bayou

Text and picture from Following General Sam Houston by Amelia Williams, Ph.D., The Steck Company, Austin, 1935.



*Following General Sam Houston: From 1793 to 1863, page 162.
by Amelia W. Williams and Bernhardt Wall, 1935.*

THE CHURCH AT CEDAR BAYOU



EDAR BAYOU runs adjacent to Goose Creek, a tributary to Galveston Bay. Along this waterway settlers established their farm homes during the colonial period of Texas history, and the little log house that they built as a place of worship was one of the first Protestant churches to be erected in Texas. Tradesmen and a few farmers built their homes about the church, and, in time, it became the nucleus of a thriving village. Ten miles from the town of Cedar Bayou there is a point of land extending far into the bay that is known as Cedar Point. In 1841, Houston bought this tract of land, and, on the projection that reached farthest into the bay, he established a simple summer home to which he brought his family every summer to enjoy the cool sea-breezes and long swims in the healthful salt waters.

Through the early 1840's the burning question in Texas was that of annexation to the United States. One of the most famous public discussions of this topic took place at a Fourth of July celebration that was held at the Cedar Bayou church. For this occasion the citizens of the place had prepared for a big barbecue and public speaking, a very popular type of gathering in those times. All the notables for miles around were invited to the affair. Sam Houston and his guest, Andrew Jackson Donelson, who a few months later became the United States minister to the Texas Republic, were there; Mirabeau B. Lamar was there, as well as a score of other celebrities of the new nation. Houston, Lamar, and Donelson all made speeches on the great topic of the day. The people were especially interested in Donelson's speech, not only because he was an eloquent speaker, but also because he was the adopted son of Andrew Jackson and was supposed to speak the opinions of Jackson himself on the subject. But the master of ceremonies, and really the speaker of the day, was Judge Nimrod, of Chappell Hill. He was a highly educated man in his full prime, and John W. Lockhart, in his *Sixty Years on the Brazos*, says: "On this occasion the Judge was full of pluck and in full feather. He soon left the earth and was among the planets on the track of the Ameri-

can Eagle. But the national bird led him from star to star, but wandered most gloriously in the constellation of the original Thirteen, where he wished to plant the Lone Star of Texas. When he began his descent he circled gently among murky clouds, touching now and then a high point, until to his great delight and safety he reached the arc of a rainbow, and after decanting eloquently on its beauties, he slid gracefully to earth again without having ruffled a feather." This is a humorous but excellent description of the kind of speeches made on such occasions in the early days.

The old church where this great political speaking was held is still standing, but it has undergone so many alterations and has had so many additions that there is little resemblance between the building that stands today and the little log house in which the celebration of 1844 was held. Our picture, however, shows the church as it was in Houston's day.

CHAPTER XXVII

CEDAR CREEK CHURCH AND THE SPREADING
OF THE EAGLE

IT WAS at this old church that a barbecue was given by the citizens in 1842. General Houston, Major A. J. Donaldson and General Lamar were invited to make speeches on the topics of the day. At that period the subject of Annexation was being discussed and as Major Donaldson was the minister to Texas from the United States, it was expected that he would base his remarks on that subject, which he did in glowing and eloquent terms.

His discourse was listened to with marked respect, as he, in addition to being the minister of the United States, was also the adopted son of General Jackson. Consequently, he in a large sense spoke the opinions of that great and influential man.

However, the day was opened by Judge Nimrod of Chappell Hill, the orator of the day. The Judge was a highly educated gentleman who had taken his degree at the State University in Alabama, and was in his prime.

The day being the Fourth of July, the Judge was full of pluck, and fully feathered. He soon left the earth and was amidst the planets, on track of the American Eagle. The national bird led him from star to star, and wandered most gloriously among the original Thirteen.

When he commenced his descent he circled gently among the murky clouds, touching now and then upon their highest points, until, to his great delight and safety, he reached the arc of a rainbow, and after descanting eloquently and grandly of its beauties, slid gently to the earth without rumpling a feather.

Such was the character of the speeches made in those days upon such occasions. General Lamar followed Major Donaldson and Judge Nimrod, his efforts bristling with eloquence and with patriotism.

administration, while President of Texas: "an error of the head and not of the heart." He further states, that I thought he wished to supplant me. He is mistaken; I was fearful of no man supplanting me! When Mr. Lamar was appointed by the Cabinet (without law) a Major General in the army, over the heads of decent men, I was confined with my wound, not, as he says, in the United States, but in Nacogdoches. I certainly made no complaint that I recollect, for with the news of his appointment that of his rejection by the army as commander, also came. If the statement was incorrect, the history of the times will correct the error. Mr. Lamar was informed that the army would not receive him, as General. After some negotiations, it was agreed that a vote of the army should be taken upon his acceptance or rejection. The vote was taken, and out of eighteen hundred ~~an~~ two thousand men Mr. Lamar received not exceeding one hundred and sixteen votes. Thus was un-Generaled the veritable "hero of San Jacinto." General Houston had ample revenge for the modest presumption of Mr. Lamar, if he desired any. I will, to illustrate further the character of this witness, relate an incident which occurred at a barbecue on Cedar Creek, in Washington County, Texas, on the 4th of July, 1843. After an oration, delivered by Mr. Nimrod Chappell, Mr. Lamar, in the presence of the American Charge ~~de~~ Affaires, arose, and in the course of his speech, after assuring the addressees of the good intentions by which he had been actuated in his administration of the Government while he was President, he asserted that if "he had committed any errors, they were errors of the head and not of the heart." To this no one

<https://www.sanjacinto-museum.org/content/documents/KempSketches/SJV428.pdf>

Sam Houston Letter. San Jacinto Museum. Herzstein Library, Sam Houston Biography.

Alexander's Chapel Historical Committee, 1897

In 1897, Alexander's Chapel appointed a committee to put together a church history. The original report seems to have been lost to time and floods, but it is possible to piece together some of the story from three local newspaper articles from 1933 and 1935, articles from the *Texas Wesleyan Banner* (1850-1854) and *Texas Christian Advocate* (1854-1878), the surviving Quarterly Conference record of the Lynchburg circuit, a 1931 Goose Creek & Cedar Bayou history book, and other original documents. A 1933 article in the Goose Creek Tri Cities Sun says:

A yellowed and stained document, now in the possession of the present pastor, Rev S.P. Wright, prepared by a historical committee in 1897 says briefly, 'Previous to this time Bros. Thurber and Hobbs had visited this place and preached frequently.' That yellowed report of 1897, to which the original pink ribbon binding is still attached, prefaces itself as follows: 'To the P.C. and members of Alexander's Chapel: Dear Brethren: We, your committee appointed to look up the history of the Church at this place, beg to report as follows: We find no record of any kind earlier than 1853.¹⁵ Our report, the first eight or nine years, is made from memory of our oldest people and in some cases there is a difference of opinion. We believe the facts presented to be correct.'

The document tells of the purchase in 1847 of ten acres of land at \$4 per acre. 'As much as we can learn from memory the first church house was built in 1847 or 1848. This structure apparently cost \$104 and was replaced ten years later by a frame building erected under the supervision of a building committee composed of E.A. Stocking, H. Baker, J.W. Evans, G. Brooks and Seth Carey.'¹⁶

The following paragraph from the *Cedar Bayou United Methodist Church Sesquicentennial History* is probably quoted directly from the 1897 committee report because of the detail in names and numbers.¹⁷

Texans gathered in the community of Cedar Bayou to organize a Methodist Church under the direction of Dr. Robert Alexander. We find no official records of the meeting of this organization. The first church was organized in the private home of Hance Baker. Nine persons united with the church the first day and eighteen the second day. It is supposed the first nine were the charter members. The following were among the charter members: Mr. and Mrs. Hance Baker, Capt. and Mrs. Mosley Baker, and Gorham Tenbrook Brown. The other names are not known. We find no record of a conference at this time, hence, our record is for the conference instead of the church, in many respects. This vague history of the first church is from memory of our eldest members and in many respects

¹⁵ The 1853 record was the Lynchburg QC Minutes, 1853-1871.

¹⁶ "M.E. Church at Cedar Bayou is first in Area." [The Tri-Cities Sun \(Goose Creek, Tex.\), July 28, 1933, p30, c3.](#)

¹⁷ Travis, p7.

there is a difference of opinions.

A Goose Creek and Cedar Bayou history book written in 1931 read:

The first church in this community of which we have any record was at Midway, near the spot where the high power electric lines cross the ship channel at Baytown. Rev. Robert Alexander organized the church there. Busch's Island was then called Alexander's Island for the preacher who traveled his circuit from Midway to Crosby, Cedar Bayou, Fairview, Evergreen and other community centers. He organized the first church at Cedar Bayou, a Methodist congregation, called Alexander's Chapel.¹⁸

An article in a 1933 La Porte News Tribune said:

The first [or the next] church was built in this section of the country on a spot known as Harmony Grove somewhere near the present Duke Homestead between Pelly and Baytown. This church was moved to Cedar Bayou later and the new church was erected by these pioneers. The building was rough-sawed six inch stuff on a high crude but sturdy frame. The floor was made of one by twelve planks. Neither the walls nor the roof were completely covered, and keeping it warm was a problem.¹⁹

These articles predate the Williams book and are significant because they contain no mention of the Sam Houston barbeque story but do state other earlier church locations and dates. In 1838 Wm. Scott heirs established a town named Louisville²⁰ at Point Pleasant²¹ located at Midway,

¹⁸ This is a mashup of stories from several different time periods. Robert Alexander was Presiding Elder of Galveston District from 1841 through 1844 when the Cedar Bayou church was organized at Hance Baker's home near Midway. From 1845 to 1868 he was serving in Methodist Districts removed from Galveston and would not have regularly preached in this area. Churches at Manayunk (Crosby) and Greenville (probably Evergreen) were only in the circuit during the early 1860s. Alexander returned to the area in 1868 when he purchased Adam's Island, later called Alexander Island. When he was appointed as a circuit preacher to Bay Mission in 1870 the only two churches active in the circuit were Cedar Bayou and Midway. By the end of 1871 there were four. *Robert Alexander and the Early Methodist Church in Texas*. The church was not called Alexander's Chapel until the new church was built in 1886. (Texas Christian Advocate, April 1, 1886, p3).

Richard Hogue "Grandpa" Dickson, who had come to the Baytown area in 1850, and was the subject of one of the interviews, stated that the church was first established at Midway. His brother in law, John Ross Hamilton, was a Methodist preacher who lived in the parsonage on Cedar Bayou, and his nephew, Wm. H. Hamilton, was the preacher for the (Methodist) San Jacinto Circuit in 1850. "Grandpa" Dickson was a devout Methodist and was an eye witness to the goings-on in the Methodist circuit during the mid-1800s. When he died in 1931, just forty-three days shy of his one hundredth birthday, he was about 30 years older than the oldest Cedar Bayou Methodist church member and was the only person alive with first-hand knowledge of the church at Midway. *Pioneer Sketches, Cedar Point to San Jacinto*. 1931, page 69, by the Robert E. Lee Library Club, sponsored by Mrs. O.L. Nelson. The book was dedicated to Grandpa Dickson, "Our Patriarch." It is at the Baytown History Museum and a copy is in the reference section of the Sterling Municipal Public Library in Baytown.

¹⁹ The News Tribune, (LaPorte, Tx), July 28, 1933, Section 7, Page 2, Column 1. (Preserved on microfilm at the Sterling Municipal Public Library).

²⁰ "Town of Louisville" [Telegraph and Texas Register, June 30, 1838, Page 7.](#)

²¹ "Dr. David Drysdale takes the pleasure of informing the public that he has established himself at Mr. Scott's, Louisville, formerly called Point Pleasant..." ["Telegraph and Texas Register, July 21, 1838 Page 5.](#)

about a half mile from “where the high power electric lines cross the ship channel.” Exxon docks and tank farm are situated there today. Louisville consisted of at least twelve town blocks and lots went on sale July 4, 1838. The location of this town and its wharf provided easy access for the steamboats which increasingly plied the waters between Houston, Galveston, and points around Trinity Bay. A.L. Crossman had a store and Dr. David Drysdale had his office there and because of its convenient location in the precinct it was used as a voting place. In 1840 Thomas O. Summers was the preacher for the Galveston circuit and the following year he served Houston as well, traveling between the two cities every two weeks, passing and probably stopping at Louisville both ways.²² Moseley Baker, G.S. Hardcastle, and John H. Walton, who all lived in the Baytown area in 1840, were charter members of the Shearn Church in Houston in Summers’ circuit,²³ so it’s easy to believe that he would have preached here. Louisville did not succeed and only a few lot sales were recorded because it was inundated in the 1844 hurricane. In 1842-1843 Rev. Summers made a tour through the eastern states to secure funding to build churches at Houston and Galveston.²⁴ The Shearn Church in Houston met in the Presbyterian Church, built in 1842, until they completed their building in 1843,²⁵ and Ryland Chapel in Galveston was opened that same year.²⁶ Both buildings were valued at \$6,000 each. The Cedar Bayou church at Midway was the second oldest Methodist and the third oldest Protestant church building in Harris County. The church at Midway²⁷ would have been small enough to not require additional funding and also small enough to easily build and escape notice.

²² [Dr. Summers, a Life Study](#), by O.P. Fitzgerald, p109.

²³ Blandin, p23.

²⁴ [Dr. Summers, a Life Study](#), by O.P. Fitzgerald, P111.

²⁵ “They have a Catholic church [in Houston], and there is also a house of worship for the Presbyterians. The Methodists have a very neat brick chapel, nearly finished, for which we are mainly indebted to the indefatigable labors of Brother Summers, and the liberality of our friends in the States.” [History of the Shearn Church 1837-1907](#), p28.

²⁶ <https://www.moody.org/church-history>

²⁷ The Midway location was important enough that another Methodist church was built there in 1868 after the Harmony Grove church closed. Quarterly Conference (QC) minutes, Lynchburg circuit, February 13, 1869, p94.

Robert Alexander mentioned the church at Midway in 1870 when he was appointed to Bay Mission. Lide, p96.

The church was still there when the 1875 hurricane hit, “The Midway church was removed from its foundation, Lynchburg washed away...” Christian Advocate, April 1, 1876, p6. (continued next page)

It was rebuilt again because it appears on the 1901 Lynchburg to Cedar Bayou Road (today’s Bayway Drive). HC Map Book 3, p68.

On August 8, 1844, Mrs. Sam Houston wrote a letter to her husband and said:

We had preaching in our little church yesterday by Mr. Friend, the Methodist.²⁸

Her wording hints that the preaching by L.S. Friend, recognized by Cedar Bayou Methodist Church as its first preacher, could have occurred in a church building rather than in a private home. Whichever it was, the location would have been in or near the former town of Louisville at Midway, and since she specified the denomination, the pulpit would have been filled by whichever preacher was available. L.S. Friend came to Texas as a missionary preacher sometime during 1844 and was admitted to the East Texas Conference on trial in January 1845. His circuit assignment that year was to Liberty.²⁹ Cedar Bayou was part of the San Jacinto circuit which was established in 1845 and conference records show the first circuit preacher was William Hamilton.³⁰

The 1847 purchase date may indicate a growth in the area because the Cedar Bayou Post office was established in March of that year at the Houston to Liberty mail crossing in Liberty (today Chambers) County. W.G. Mills was appointed postmaster³¹ and the mail stop was located at his store on the east side of Cedar Bayou near the ferry he operated at Needle Point Road.³²

The Cedar Bayou church historical narrative states that “For a time the members met in the home of Hance Baker which was located about two miles down the bayou from the site chosen for the permanent home of this church.” However, since no church records exist from that time period to justify this statement, 1) it seems to be either an attempt to reconcile the 1844 founding date with the 1847 purchase date of the Parsonage Tract, or 2) perhaps they met in Hance Baker’s house after the church at Midway was destroyed in the 1854 hurricane, but the most plausible explanation is that 3) the organizational meeting with Robert Alexander occurred early in the

²⁸ [The Personal Correspondence of Sam Houston](#), Madge Roberts, (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1994), p 313.

²⁹ [Annual Conference minutes, M.E. Church, 1839-1845, p554.](#)

³⁰ Annual Conference minutes, M.E. Church, South, 1845-1846, p98.

³¹ Post Offices in Liberty County Texas, 1847, [M841 - Record of Appointments of Postmasters, 1832-Sept. 30, 1971.](#)

³² “... The petition of G. W. Ferrand for license to keep a ferry on Cedar Bayou, at the ferry formerly Kokernot’s since Mills at the mail crossing from Lynchburg to Liberty...” HCCC, February 1859, Vol A, p223.

year³³ and they met in Hance Baker's home until a proper church could be built at Midway sometime before Mrs. Houston wrote her letter in August. On December 31, 1844, Baker purchased a 100 acre tract of land on Cedar Bayou from John H. Walton, another charter member of Houston's Shearn Methodist church,³⁴ at the stated location. However, the 1850 census shows him and his family still living next door to future Baytown Postmaster Simon Hagerman near Midway.³⁵ So, through 1850, and probably through at least 1854, the "private home of Hance Baker" was not at the 100 acre tract on Cedar Bayou.³⁶ By 1860 he had moved to that location.³⁷

The 1850 Census of Social Statistics shows three Methodist churches in Harris County (see Appendix).³⁸ The largest was the Shearn church in Houston which could seat 350 people and had property valued at \$6,000. Both of the other two Methodist churches in Harris County could seat 100 people and had property valued at \$400 each. The Cedar Bayou church at Midway was undoubtedly a frame building because there were sawmills around Galveston Bay and on the San Jacinto River which were easily accessible by boat. A church large enough to accommodate 100 people would have been at least 800 square feet, or about 20' by 40', but probably closer to 1000 square feet.³⁹ If the picture of the log parsonage illustrated in Amelia Williams' book is an accurate rendition, it was much smaller, and if the door width was three feet, that building was about 14' by 28' or about 400 square feet⁴⁰ and could not have possibly seated 100 people, but would be the appropriate size for a log cabin parsonage.

³³ An unreferenced article stated that the Lynchburg circuit was established in April 1844, [Baytown Sun, October 5, 1969, p18](#). This is not borne out by Texas Conference records. San Jacinto circuit was created in 1845.

³⁴ HCDB J, p273. John H. Walton to Hance Baker, Dec 31, 1844, recorded Mar 31, 1845.

³⁵ The particular wording, "Texans gathered in the community of Cedar Bayou to organize a Methodist Church," indicates that they considered Hance Baker's residence, which was west of Goose Creek, to be in Cedar Bayou, the name of the post office which served the area. According to the [1850 census, p54](#), Hance Baker's residence was located near Midway. He appears sequentially with Simon Hagerman who lived where the old Baytown Post Office is situated on Market Street today. HCDB M, p283, Scott to Hagerman, Sep 3, 1847. By 1860 Baker had moved to his farm on Cedar Bayou.

³⁶ See the map on page 23.

³⁷ [1860 Harris County Census, Pct 8, p7](#).

³⁸ Four Protestant churches in Houston were mentioned in the Texas Wesleyan Banner, June 12, 1850, p34.

³⁹ This estimate is based on the [Churchplaza.com](#) website and confirmed by comparing the size of three Houston Churches which are shown on the [1877 Sanborn Fire Insurance map](#) as compared with the 1870 Social Statistics Census, page 12. The Methodist and Presbyterian churches had about 10 square feet per seat and the Baptist had 8 square feet per seat.

⁴⁰ Since Amelia Williams wrote that the log structure was still standing in 1935, a photograph of the building may exist.

The Cedar Bayou school house was used as a voting place for elections held in 1850-1852.⁴¹ Voting places were located at convenient sites within precincts,⁴² such as near Midway with easy access for boat traffic. Sites near Midway had been the voting place for all the earlier and subsequent precinct elections⁴³ until Cedar Bayou split off from the precinct in 1862. The Fourth Quarterly meeting of the San Jacinto Mission⁴⁴ in 1851 was held on September 20 & 21 at Cedar Bayou.⁴⁵ This meeting notice, the 1850 Social Statistics, and the school house voting place indicates the existence of a church building, probably the same building mentioned by Margaret Houston in her 1844 letter. It also shows that the church at Midway was called Cedar Bayou. Richard Hogue "Grandpa" Dickson stated that he attended class in a "log cabin" located on Cedar Bayou,⁴⁶ however this was the parsonage and not the church or what was properly called the Cedar Bayou school house.⁴⁷

⁴¹ The Cedar Bayou, School House was named as a voting place for elections in the Cedar Bayou Precinct from 1850 through 1852. Telegraph and Texas Register, [February 21, 1850, p3](#); [July 4, 1850, p3](#); [October 16, 1850, p3](#); [July 30, 1852, p3](#)

⁴² The following extract from the Cedar Bayou Masonic lodge history, written by John P. Sjolander, speaks of the isolation of the Christian Smith League to the rest of east Harris County in the 1870s and why a school there could not have been a precinct voting place in the 1850s. "The old settlements were far apart, with no roads except the wide prairies between them and with many deep bayous and creeks to cross, all without bridges, and with very few ferries. For many of the old settlers, even in dry seasons, to reach Lynchburg was a hard day's journey. In wet seasons, the journey was almost impossible. But Lynchburg was the only place where a Masonic Lodge could live and thrive, because of all the population of the town, and the nearness of some of the older settlements. But some of the members of the lodge lived as far as thirty miles away. However, in the late 1860's of the last century, Cedar Bayou began to grow to some importance. On account of its brick manufacturing plants, the population had doubled and tripled in a few years." [Cedar Bayou Lodge No. 321, A.F. & A.M., THE SEMI-CENTENNIAL HISTORY \(1870 - 1920\)](#).

⁴³ The notice for the 1841 election named B. Page's dwelling, Goose Creek as the voting place. [Telegraph and Texas Register, August 18, 1841, p3](#).

Page had already purchased land near Cedar Bayou in the Christian Smith league, but at the time of election, he still lived on Goose Creek (HCDB Q, p425) on the farm which was later sold by Elizabeth Page to Henry Busch and would become known as Busch Landing (HCDB 88, p164).

⁴⁴ "Mission" means that the church or circuit was not expected to be able to pay the preacher's salary, and that the Conference would pay all or part of the preacher's salary. Naturally the hope was that the church or circuit would prosper and eventually not need the subsidy. From Bill Hardt, Methodist historian and archivist. <http://txmethhistory.blogspot.com/>

⁴⁵ Texas Wesleyan Banner, September 6, 1851, p43.

⁴⁶ "When nineteen, Richard returned to Texas to visit with a brother-in-law, J. R. Hamilton, a Methodist preacher and a teacher in a small, one-roomed log cabin on the present site of the Cedar Bayou cemetery." *Pioneer Sketches*.

⁴⁷ In a 1931 interview, Grandpa Dickson "recalled vividly his difficulties in trying to master the problems of logarithms in the early school." When he attended this school he was about 19 years old. This indicates that he was being tutored by his brother in law in a private school setting, rather than attending a primary school, further

On September 18, 1854, a hurricane swept up the San Jacinto River, inundating everything in its path. The wind and storm surge leveled hundreds of acres of timber and buildings along the San Jacinto River and Buffalo Bayou. It washed away all the bridges in Houston and Harrisburg and steamboats were washed ashore hundreds of yards onto the prairie.⁴⁸ The Cedar Bayou Methodist church history says that “during the years of 1854 and 1855, nothing of importance took place in the church.”⁴⁹ That was because the church at Midway, which actually *was* called Cedar Bayou,⁵⁰ was destroyed along with the church at Lynchburg.⁵¹ With no church to meet at, the November 1854 Quarterly Meeting was held at Judge Burnet’s house.⁵² At the Quarterly Meeting held in Lynchburg on May 5, 1855 two building committees were named.⁵³ Gilbert Brooks, Seth Carey, and I.W. Ashby were named to a Cedar Bayou building committee and John Rundell, John Adams, and the Rev. Williamson Williams were named for Lynchburg. After the hurricane, it’s probable that the church at Midway was rebuilt because there was a church at location as late as 1901.⁵⁴ It’s possible that the parsonage may have been used for holding church services and the building committee remodeled it for that purpose after the deed was filed in 1856.⁵⁵ The circuit was officially renamed Cedar Bayou in 1857,⁵⁶ but QC records still referred to it as the Lynchburg circuit that year.

showing that this was not what they considered the Cedar Bayou school house. [Houston Chronicle, June 22, 1931, p3.](#)

⁴⁸ “The Storm in Texas – Lynchburg and San Jacinto.” [The Weekly Advertiser \(Montgomery, Al.\), Oct 18, 1854, p2.](#)

⁴⁹ Travis, p9.

⁵⁰ The Fourth Quarterly meeting, San Jacinto Mission was held at Cedar Bayou on September 20 & 21. Texas Wesleyan Banner September 6, 1851, p43.

⁵¹ Churches at these same locations were again destroyed twenty-one years later during the 1875 hurricane. “Bay Mission.- This work is served by Rev J.S. Clower. His circuit was greatly injured by the storm last September. The Midway church was removed from its foundation, Lynchburg washed away...” Texas Christian Advocate, April 4, 1876, p6.

⁵² Unfortunately, the QC minutes followed a strict format and remarks were submitted in separate reports which have not survived. Other circuits did meet in private homes, but it was unusual in this circuit that the meeting was held at a person’s dwelling rather than at a church. QC minutes, Lynchburg circuit, November 18, 1854, p8.

⁵³ QC minutes, Lynchburg circuit, May 3, 1855, p11.

⁵⁴ Harris County Map Book 3, page 68 - Wooster & Cedar Bayou Road to Goose Creek.

⁵⁵ “The old church... has undergone so many alterations and has had so many additions that there is little resemblance between the building that stands today and the little log house...” Williams, p164.

⁵⁶ *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, 1858 and 1859.

The Cedar Bayou church history book says that from 1858-1860 nothing of importance took place in the church,⁵⁷ but this is far from the truth because in 1858 Cedar Bayou separated from Lynchburg to form its own circuit. The Quarterly meeting records for the Cedar Bayou circuit no longer exist but newspaper articles show a period of unprecedented and sustained growth with the building of a new church on Cedar Bayou and the creation of a second church in the circuit at Goose Creek, as well as regular Quarterly meetings of the circuit. Another building committee was appointed in April 1857 composed of E.A. Stocking, H. McClain, Gilbert Brooks, H.J. Bond and M.S. Tunnill.⁵⁸ Bond and Tunnill were replaced by Gardiner Brown and Jesse Brooks at the next quarterly meeting and, in February, E.A. Stocking sent the following letter to the *Texas Christian Advocate*:⁵⁹

Revival at Cedar Bayou. Mr. Editor: In reply to your call for revival intelligence in your issue of the 23d February, I will say that we can send a report of blessed things from Cedar Bayou.

The quarterly meeting for this Circuit was held on the 6th and 7th of this month, and the meeting was protracted until Tuesday evening the 9th. The church was baptized from on high - enjoying a glorious time of refreshing.

We had several additions to our strength by letter - among them your old correspondent, "Tom Palmer" and family, sixteen I think, joined on probation, and four have joined since. I hear that the gracious work is going on at other points on the Circuit.

Our Presiding Elder, Brother Seat, recommends himself to all, both by his power in the pulpit and his conciliatory manners privately and above all by his unfeigned piety, and we are well satisfied with our Circuit preacher, Bro. Parker. There is an earnest desire on the part of the members in this society for holiness. I have lived among this people for many years and have never at any time seen the Church in as good a condition as at present. We have *determined* [italics by Stocking] to build a commodious chapel; the place has become entirely too straight for us. Can't you come over and see us this spring or summer. E.A. Stocking. *Cedar Bayou*, Feb 25, 1858.

Stocking's letter indicates that a new larger church was to be built at Cedar Bayou in the spring or summer of 1858. He was a strong advocate for the church at Cedar Bayou and the community in general,⁶⁰ writing numerous letters to various newspapers extolling the virtues and benefits of

⁵⁷ Travis, page 11.

⁵⁸ This is a different group of names from the building committee which had been appointed in 1855. QC minutes, Cedar Bayou circuit, April 18, 1857, p26.

⁵⁹ "Revival at Cedar Bayou." *Texas Christian Advocate*. March 16, 1858, p1.

⁶⁰ "Cedar Creek, Chambers County." [Civilian and Gazette. Weekly, November 9, 1858, p1.](#)

the area. A revival held in July 1858 brought more than fifty people into the church.⁶¹ This church building survived until Alexander's Chapel was built in 1886, so its description⁶² would have been fresh in the memories of the 1897 history committee. Another church was erected at Goose Creek, probably during 1858, on property owned by John L. Bryan⁶³ who was a charter member of the Shearn church in Houston.⁶⁴ The small wood-frame building was located at the east end of today's Missouri Street at W.C. Britton Park on the west bank of Goose Creek.⁶⁵

The Cedar Bayou and Lynchburg circuits merged in 1860 under the name Lynchburg Mission and James Rice was appointed as the preacher.⁶⁶ The Cedar Bayou church history says that a new parsonage was built shortly after the 1857 church was completed,⁶⁷ but in 1860 Rice was living with his family one dwelling over from Ashbel Smith,⁶⁸ indicating that there was no parsonage at Christian Smith, so this building was actually the new church which Stocking had written about in his February, 1858 letter. In January, 1860, Stocking wrote another letter to the Christian Advocate recommending that several more churches be added to the circuit.⁶⁹ A camp meeting at Cedar Bayou in October 1860 added another twenty-eight members to the roll.⁷⁰ The Goose Creek church changed its name to Harmony Grove shortly thereafter⁷¹ and the following year the name of the Lynchburg Mission was renamed as the Harmony Grove circuit.⁷² The

⁶¹ "Our Home Work." Texas Christian Advocate, July 3, 1858, p3.

⁶² Travis, p15.

⁶³ Bryan purchased 375 acres on Goose Creek in May 1858. HCDB Vol U, p124, Valentine T. Dalton to John L. Bryan.

⁶⁴ Houston's Shearn church was established in 1842. *History of Shearn Church*, p23.

⁶⁵ The road to Shearn roughly followed Bayway Drive and Missouri Street, crossing Samuel Page's ferry "...Thence on the north side of Mrs. Lang's prairie field nearly direct to the Goose Creek crossing near Harmony Grove School House, Thence along Mrs. Anson Jones' road to her north gate, thence nearly direct to Shearn on Cedar Bayou..." HCCC Vol B, p7, August 19, 1861.

⁶⁶ "Appointments of the Preachers of the Texas Annual Conference." [The Weekly Telegraph, November 30, 1859, p2.](#)

⁶⁷ Travis, p91.

⁶⁸ [1860 census, Harris County Precinct No. 6, p5, Lynchburg Post Office.](#)

⁶⁹ "The Rice Field." Texas Christian Advocate, February 9, 1860, p1.

⁷⁰ "Lynchburg Circuit." Texas Christian Advocate, November 8, 1860, p2.

⁷¹ The church at Goose Creek was noted in the QC minutes, Lynchburg circuit at Cedar Bayou church, Feb 18, 1860, p48. In the minutes from July 21, 1860, p53, it is called Harmony Grove.

⁷² Minutes of the Texas Conference, 1860, p277.

Cedar Bayou Centennial history book states that Harmony Grove “did not embrace so much territory as the circuits,”⁷³ but this huge circuit actually covered the entire Galveston and Trinity bay area north of Galveston and continued north between the San Jacinto and Trinity Rivers all the way to Dayton.⁷⁴ The minutes tell that 1861 was a particularly difficult time in the church with many members leaving for the war and a yellow fever epidemic raging. Harmony Grove continued as a church until 1866. John L. Bryan died in 1867⁷⁵ and the building was moved to the Bayland Orphan Home to be used as a classroom.⁷⁶ A new church was built at Midway to replace it but Harmony Grove⁷⁷ remained the name of the circuit through 1866.⁷⁸ In 1867 the circuit name changed back to Cedar Bayou but no Q.C. records exist from 1867-1868 and few newspapers exist to tell the story of this era.⁷⁹ It was undoubtedly a very difficult time because the circuit was downgraded to mission status in 1870.⁸⁰ Robert Alexander returned as preacher to Bay Mission, living in his island home. A March 1874 letter from circuit preacher J.S. Clower gave his address as Midway, Texas rather than Cedar Bayou indicating that there was not a parsonage and Robert Alexander probably boarded circuit preachers.⁸¹

When Seth Cary platted his new town in 1860 where the Cedar Bayou church was already

⁷³ History of Cedar Bayou Methodist Church, page 1. In her introduction, Louise Travis states that “many of the early records were either non-existent or unreadable so there were some gaps,”

⁷⁴ QC minutes, Lynchburg circuit, March 2, 1861, p57.

⁷⁵ [The Galveston Daily News, July 21, 1867, p3.](#)

⁷⁶ “The small community church building at Harmony Grove was moved to the Home to become a schoolhouse.” *Candle by Night, The Story of the Life and Times of Kezia Pane de Pelchin, Texas Teacher, Social Worker, and Nurse*, p208. By Harold J. Matthews, 1942.

⁷⁷ Churches in the Harmony Grove circuit included Goose Creek (changed to Harmony Grove), Cedar Bayou, Lynchburg, Red Bluff, Manayunk (Crosby), San Jacinto (across the river south of Lynchburg), Old River, West Liberty (Dayton), Barrow’s (probably Benjamin Barrow’s land grant north of Baytown), Oak Island, and Greenville (either Evergreen or Green’s Bayou). In 1863, the circuit was reduced to just Harmony Grove, Cedar Bayou, and San Jacinto.

⁷⁸ QC minutes, Harmony Grove circuit, October 13, 1866, p92.

⁷⁹ The only known records for the Cedar Bayou circuit are QC notices in the Texas Christian Advocate, Jan 26, 1858; Jun 22, 1858; and Oct 24, 1859.

⁸⁰ QC minutes, Bay Mission, February 12, 1870, page not numbered.

⁸¹ Texas Christian Advocate, March 18, 1874, p7.

Although there was not an official U.S. post office there, Midway Landing was shown as a mail stop in the 1870 Census, Harris County, Subdivision 35, p4. The census shows Robert Alexander on that page so he probably opened his home to board circuit preachers. If Rev. Clower lived near the Methodist church, he would have used the Cedar Bayou Post Office across the road.

located, he named it Shearn,⁸² most likely in tribute to Charles Shearn and the Shearn Methodist Church in Houston. A secession meeting was held at the Cedar Bayou church in February 1861⁸³ and the location was given as Farmersville in the precinct which was interchangeably called Cedar Bayou or Goose Creek.⁸⁴ In October 1861, the board granted permission to P.T. Woodall to purchase “the old church building” at Cedar Bayou,⁸⁵ located on a corner of the parsonage land which they agreed to sell to A.W. Hutton⁸⁶ at the same time. The old log parsonage had probably been used as a chapel and classroom since 1854, but this was not the “Cedar Bayou school house” at Midway used as a voting place from 1850-1852. This may have been the building which was to be sold. If so, the sale didn’t go through because, according to Amelia Williams, it survived until at least 1935. A new parsonage was built at Cedar Bayou in early 1875.⁸⁷

The town name of Cedar Bayou does not seem to have been used by the inhabitants until around 1871 when the Cedar Bayou Post Office was opened in C.F. Ilfrey’s store⁸⁸ with Ilfrey as postmaster.⁸⁹ The name of Shearn continued to appear on deeds until at least 1895 and even as late as 1915, the name of Shearn was still in use as evidenced by an unpublished book, *Genealogic Notes concerning the Pioneer Families & Landowners in the Cedar Bayou District*

⁸² HCDB X, p493, Seth Cary P.A. to William Shepherd, Oct 6, 1860.
Also see note 64.

⁸³ “Letter from Galveston Bay.” [The Weekly Telegraph April 30, 1861, p 2.](#)

⁸⁴ “Letter from Cedar Bayou,” [Weekly Telegraph, March 5, 1861, p2.](#)

“Public Meeting at Farmersville,” [Weekly Telegraph, May 7, 1861, p2.](#)

⁸⁵ “The old church” could have been built by the 1856 building committee or it could be an unknown earlier chapel. It was not the 1848 log parsonage which, according to Amelia Williams’ book, survived until at least 1935. It confirms that the 1858 church that E.A. Stocking wrote about was built.

In October 1861 the board approved disposition of parsonage and church property at Cedar Bayou: “to sell to A.W. Hutton [Travis, p12 says A.M. Britton.] a certain corner of the parsonage land, to lay off and sell certain burial lots on the same land, and to sell to Bro Woodall the old church building to appropriate the process of said sales to the improvement of the church property by fencing it. All of which was granted.” QC minutes, Harmony Grove circuit, October 14, 1861, p62. Neither deed has yet been found in the county records.

⁸⁶ Travis, p12 says “A.M. Britton.”

⁸⁷ “We must not overlook the neat parsonage built this year at Cedar Bayou.” Texas Christian Advocate, July 3, 1875, p4.

⁸⁸ This agrees with John P. Sjolander’s statement, “However, in the late 1860’s, Cedar Bayou began to grow to some importance.”

⁸⁹ Application for Cedar Bayou Post Office, [M1126 - Post Office Department Reports of Site Locations, 1837-1950.](#)

*before 1915. Cedar Bayou – alias Shearn City.*⁹⁰ The family names listed in the book (Leger, Scoregga, West, Pelly, Gaillard, Pruett, etc.) show that, even then, they considered that the Cedar Bayou district extended as far west as Midway because at the time, the whole area was served by the Cedar Bayou Post Office.

The 1897 report and other documents show that, although they misunderstood the extent of the Cedar Bayou district in the mid-1800s, the Cedar Bayou Methodists knew that their history began at Midway and then to Harmony Grove and Cedar Bayou. But when Amelia Williams published her book in 1935, they interpreted the Fourth of July barbeque story as their long-lost history and rewrote the early history of the church around an event which happened eighty-five miles away.

The San Jacinto mission was created in 1845 and renamed as the Lynchburg circuit in 1853. No records of the San Jacinto mission are known to exist but the 1850-1851 Texas Wesleyan Banner contains notices for San Jacinto Mission QC meetings at Cedar Bayou, San Jacinto, West Liberty (Dayton), Old River, Lynchburg, Tarkington Prairie, and Penn's Meeting House (Crosby).

⁹⁰ Written by Leon G.A. van Meldert, M.S. D.V.M., Cedar Bayou, Texas and available at the Sterling Library in Baytown.

Social Statistics Schedules from U.S. Censuses

RELIGION.			
No. of Churches.	Denomination.	No. each will accommodate.	Value of Church Property.
95	96	97	98
1	M. Episcopalian	500	6000
2	Methodist E	350	3000
3	Roman Catholic	200	2500
4	Episcopalian	300	7000
5	Baptist	350	6000
6	Methodist E	100	400
7	Methodist E	100	400

1850 Census Social Statistics Schedule.

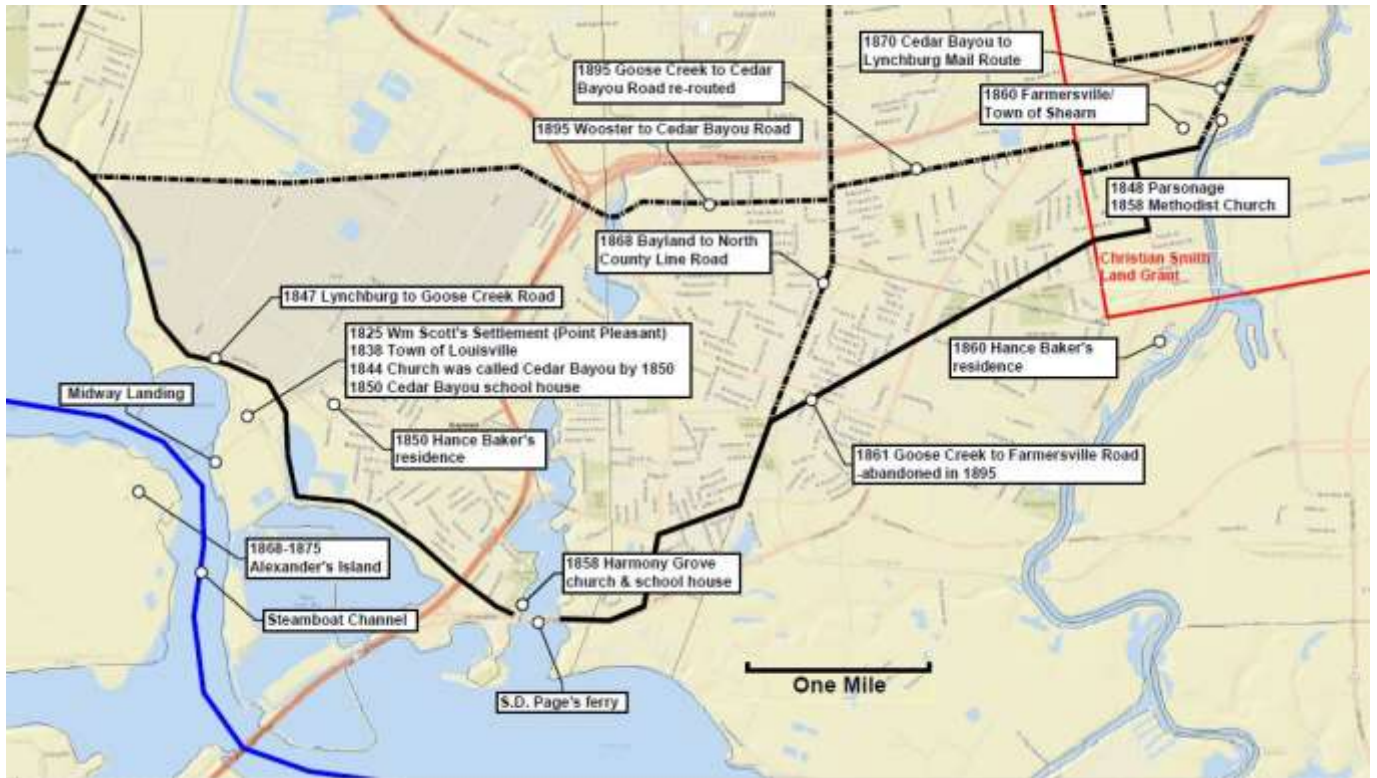
One of the two smaller Methodist churches is Cedar Bayou at Midway. The 350-seat Methodist church is the Shearn Church in Houston.

The 1870 Census Social Statistics Schedule lists only churches in Houston.

RELIGION.			
No. of Churches.	Denomination.	No. each will accommodate.	Value of Church Property.
95	96	97	98
1	M. E.	150	400
1	"	300	1000
1	"	200	600
1	R. Catholic	600	900
1	"	400	600
1	Protestant	350	10,000
1	Episcopal	450	20,000
1	M. Episcopal	350	10,000
1	M. Lutheran	300	-
1	Baptist	350	8,000
1	Lutheran	230	2,000
1	M. German	250	4,000

1860 Census Social Statistics Schedule.

It is unknown which churches are Cedar Bayou and Harmony Grove.



Church locations derived from “pre-Amelia Williams’ book” sources. Through almost the entire 19th century, this entire area was considered to be Cedar Bayou. Map drawn by Chuck Chandler.

“The first church in this community of which we have any record was at Midway, near the spot where the high power electric lines cross the ship channel at Baytown. Rev. Robert Alexander organized the church there.” [The Daily Sun, April 29, 1935, p7.](#)

“Texans gathered in the community of Cedar Bayou to organize a Methodist Church under the direction of Dr. Robert Alexander. The first church was organized in the private home of Hance Baker.” *Cedar Bayou United Methodist Church Sesquicentennial History 1844-1994.*

“The [next] church was built in this section of the country on a spot known as Harmony Grove. This church was moved to Cedar Bayou later and the new church was erected by these pioneers. [The News Tribune, \(LaPorte, Tx\), July 28, 1933, Section 7, Page 2, Column 1.](#) (Preserved on microfilm at the Sterling Municipal Public Library).

As much as we can learn from memory the first church house [which was actually the parsonage] was built in 1847 or 1848. This structure apparently cost \$104 and was replaced ten years later by a frame building erected under the supervision of a building committee. [The Tri-Cities Sun \(Goose Creek, Tex.\), July 28, 1933, p30, c3.](#)

Although private roads existed, there was no public road to today’s Cedar Bayou community until 1861 when the Goose Creek to Farmersville Road was built. [Commissioners Court Minutes Vol B, p002, May 20, 1861.](#) Three months later the name of Farmersville was changed to Shearn. The road we call Cedar Bayou-Lynchburg was built as the Lynchburg to Cedar Bayou Mail Route when the Cedar Bayou Post Office was established in 1870.

Resources

[*The Cedar Bayou Methodist Church: Hidden Truths and Myths*](#), by Sarah Burnett, Lee College. Published in Touchstone Magazine, 2015.

Cedar Bayou United Methodist Church Sesquicentennial History 1844-1994, by Louise Devereux Travis, 1996.

Cedar Bayou Methodist Church, Historical Marker Narrative, by Marie Ellender Garrett, 1983. Includes portions of the “Church Register of the M.E. Church, South with minutes of selected conference meetings and a list of preachers from 1844 to 1868.

Following General Sam Houston: From 1793 to 1863, by Amelia W. Williams and Bernhardt Wall, 1935.

[*Sixty years on the Brazos; the life and letters of Dr. John Washington Lockhart, 1824-1900*](#), by Mrs. Jonnie Lockhart Wallis in association with Laurance L. Hill, 1930.

Sam Houston Letter. San Jacinto Museum. Herzstein Library, Sam Houston Biography. <https://www.sanjacinto-museum.org/content/documents/KempSketches/SJV428.pdf>, page 18.

[*History of the Great Secession, Methodist Episcopal Church in the Year 1845*](#). 1855, by Charles Elliott. Cincinnati, Swormstedt & Poe, for the Methodist Episcopal Church

[*History of Shearn Church 1837-1907*](#). By Mrs. I.M.E. Blandin, 1908.

Robert Alexander and the Early Methodist Church in Texas. La Grange, Texas. Press of La Grange Journal, 1935, by Ann Ayers Lide.

Minutes of the Quarterly Conference (QC), Lynchburg Circuit, 1853-1871. During the years 1858-1859 Cedar Bayou was its own circuit separate from Lynchburg and no records of the Cedar Bayou circuit during these years are known to exist. In 1867 there are no entries for any church in the Cedar Bayou circuit for the years 1867-1868. The link downloads as a pdf. <http://www.baytownlibrarylocal.org/piwigo/action.php?id=1992&part=e&download>

Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, (1839-1845). <https://archive.org/details/minutesannualco00churgoog>

Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (1845-1865). <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/mechsouthconfjournals/>

Texas Wesleyan Banner and *Texas Christian Advocate*. Available on microfilm at the Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

Harris County Deed Books (HCDB) and *Harris County Commissioners Court minutes (HCCC)* are available at the Harris County Archives, 11525 Todd St, Houston, TX.

Texas United Methodist Historical Society Newsletter

Fall, 2020 Vol. 12, #1

Wm. C. Hardt, editor

Editor's Letter

One of the most frustrating problems we find in reading local church histories is the way that errors are perpetuated. All too frequently if a local church historian writing in the 1930s said a church was founded in 1852, that date appears in all subsequent histories of the church—even if it cannot be documented. In some cases, the historian is skeptical of what previous historians have written and goes back to the original sources in the interest of historical accuracy.

I was therefore delighted when a local church historian shared the results of his research in which he overturned a long-standing error and then went even further and demonstrated how the error occurred--- more than eighty years ago.

The historian is Chuck Chandler who writes features for the *Baytown Sun*. He was puzzled about some of the history of Cedar Bayou UMC that just didn't make sense so he dug and dug and in doing so learned how the error began.

The published history of Cedar Bayou said that Sam Houston attended a 4th of July barbeque there in 1844 at the present site of the church. Chandler was skeptical because the deed to the church property dates to 1847. The more he looked into it, the more he thought the barbecue occurred at Cedar Creek in Washington County rather than Cedar Bayou.

Chandler tracked down the source of the 1844 barbecue at Cedar Bayou to the Amelia Williams 1935 book, *Following General Sam Houston from 1793 to 1963*. Williams at the time was employed by Eugene Barker at the University of Texas to transcribe historic letters. Williams even elaborated on the church and included a sketch drawing of the church that existed at the time. Chandler comes to the conclusion in which I concur that Williams mistakenly transcribed Cedar **Creek** as Cedar **Bayou** from one of Houston's letters. When the Williams book was published in 1935, Cedar Bayou Methodists began reconstructing their history around this new information ---even though it was in error.

Chandler's article was published in the *Baytown Sun* on September 6. Access to the full article requires a subscription, but the drawing may be seen at

https://baytownsun.com/opinion/article_88f977f0-f15a-11ea-93e2-b30b4fdcdc20.html

Hats off to Chuck Chandler for showing how local church history should be written.