

Mt. Ararat Baptist Church Hodge Park, Kansas City, Missouri

Originally Located in Howard County, Missouri

(A short story of history and love by Gene T. Waters)



HISTORY: 200 years ago. Settlers from Kentucky and Tennessee and as far away as Delaware came to central Missouri and settled in Howard County, Missouri. Howard County was the mother of many counties, as there were some 30 counties cut from it. The congregation that became Mt. Ararat was organized in ca.1830 and met under trees and in homes initially. They then combined with the Pemberton School and soon became known as the Old Schoolhouse Baptist Church. The school and the church was located 6 miles east of Armstrong, 5 miles south west of Higbee, and about 10 miles north east of Fayette on what is now highway H. A pastor, Bro. Terrill, called on the church

monthly in his rounds of the area. In 1865 they joined the Southern Baptist denomination. Sometime in the 1870's the school burned down. They then planned a formal church building which they named **Mt. Ararat Baptist Church**. The building was completed and dedicated on Christmas day 1884. The church was the social center for the community. There was no electricity, running water, automobiles, radios, or airplanes. On Sundays the church family socialized at the church for the day, then went home for another week. Baptisms took place in the local pond.

The church steeple is topped by a fleur-de-lis with a dove representing the Holy Spirit descending on the congregation.



In 1921, the church members gathered for a Thanksgiving celebration. The church was a vital part of the local area.

In the 1980's the congregation got down to just six people and they were concerned that someone would come along and burn it down. So, they decided to donate the church to the Kansas City, Missouri Parks Department. This was facilitated by my wife, Pat Waters (this being her family church), who was President of the Clay County Archives, and she knew all the surviving members. The photo is of the church in the original location.



This prompted our interest in perpetuating its history. They completely dismantled the church and moved it to Hodge Park (also known as The Living History Museum at Shoal Creek Park) in Kansas City, Missouri. The church had resided in Howard County for 100 years and now 35 years in Kansas City. All the pews, pulpit, and the attendance plaque are original. The two organs are vintage but not part of the original church as they preferred a piano. There are no gutters on the church so there is a well-defined drip line on each side. I had been a rock collector, accumulating four office boxes of stones which now fill the drip line. The surviving members gave all the original church records to Pat Waters (my wife) and they have been relocated to the Archives of William Jewell College, Liberty, Missouri. The Park has about a dozen vintage buildings and are open monthly in the summer and Christmas for public inspection.

LOVE: I became interested in Astronomy at the age of 14 and was part of a half dozen others in forming the Central Missouri Amateur Astronomers at Central Methodist College in Fayette, Missouri c. 1947. My interest was primarily their large 12 1/4 inch refracting telescope in Morrison Observatory originally located in Glasgow, Missouri.

By age 15 I had my own telescope and did astronomical research for the AAVSO of Harvard University. I did this for three years providing detailed data of sunspots daily. I planned on going to Harvard, but that didn't happen. I was not smart enough to get a scholarship and my parents couldn't afford it. So, what was I to do?

THIS IS WHERE THE GOOD LORD STEPPED IN.

With my acquaintance with Central Methodist College, and their observatory, in Fayette, I decided to enroll there in the fall of 1950. This went well. I had always had a summer job since age 12. So, I wandered to the Mattingly Bros. Co. (a dime store located just off the Fayette Square and one block from the college) and obtained a job as a stock boy. It wasn't long before I noticed the young lady clerk at the candy counter. She was Patsy Robb. In early January 1951 I got the nerve up to ask her for a date on January 5, 1951. We joined her friends at the local drug store for 5 cent cokes with a juke box and all. This lasted for a short time, but a MAJOR problem remained. Pat was a High School Junior, and I was a College Freshman! The two should never meet.

Unbeknownst to me, a lady at the store was a good friend of Pat's parents and she evidently put in a good word for me. After several weeks her parents relented and said we could date at grandparents' church, **Mt. Ararat Baptist Church** on Sundays. This is now the **Good Lord** working. After only three weeks I wrote a poem: "I know it's juvenile to think this way, but I dream of you all the live long day. For I want this to be something to last to eternity" That is now happening.

Soon I was trusted with the use of our family car. We made it through the rest of 1951 and into 1952. There was one more BARRIER, Pat's grandfather was concerned about her marrying outside the faith. Well, I solved that in a hurry, I became a Baptist! Yeah, right but hopefully I have grown since then. I had gone to Fayette as a Methodist and came out a Baptist.

On Valentine's Day 1952 I gave Pat an engagement ring. Her parents asked us to wait until after her graduation to make it public, so we did. That summer Pat went on to Gem City Business College in Quincy, Illinois which occasioned many trips from Jefferson City to Fayette to Quincy. I worked for the local Power Company and moved to the University of Missouri that fall. When Pat graduated with a Secretarial Certificate, she obtained a job at, yes, Waters Hall on the campus of Missouri University in Columbia, Missouri as a secretary and I was employed as an auditor for the university. Waters Hall is still in use by the University. It was built in in 1909 and named after my uncle, Henry Jackson Waters. Henry Waters was the Dean of the College of Agriculture from 1897 to 1909. All went well to complete our plan to marry on December 21, 1952. She was 18 and I was just 20, so I had to get my parents' consent.

I served in the United States Coast Guard and worked for The Gas Service Company and Pat stayed at home as we raised our family. We were married for 54 years raising a family of four children. Pat rejoined the Lord in 2007. I now live near Kansas City, but I frequently come to Fayette to visit Pat at the City Cemetery. A beautiful life orchestrated by the **Good Lord**. I have now been telling this story for some 36 years.



The photo is the original location of the church. The inset is Gene and Pat at the dedication of the restored church in the new location.

Gene & Pat Waters