

IBERIA'S CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

by Peggy Smith Hake

The site of Iberia's Church of the Nazarene was once occupied by the Methodists. It has been 'holy ground' for well over a century. In 1871, James and Ruth Martin sold off a parcel of land in Iberia to the Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Miller County. The trustees named in the deed included William Tallman, David Farnham, John W. Waite, Jeremiah (Jerry) C. Tallman, and John C. Thompson. They built a church on this land and kept it until 1903. That year the trustees (John Ferguson, Jeremiah Whalen, John L. Hopkins, John C. Thompson, and M.V.B. Trent) sold the church site to George R. Mace, a local physician, for \$255. In the transaction, the church was referred to as "People's M.E. Church". When Dr. Mace purchased the old Methodist church, it is my understanding he remodeled the building into his living quarters. Later he constructed a small structure to the west of the old church where he sat up his medical profession and practice. When the trustees of the Nazarene Church bought the property, the small medical office was still standing on the lot.

From 1903 through 1925, this property was owned by various members of the Mace family. In 1915, George and Victoria Mace sold to Elmer and Erma Mace. In 1918, Elmer and Erma sold to Bert R. Mace, a single man. Bert kept the property until 1925 when he sold it to Martin C. and Mary Hicks.

On March 10, 1926, Martin and Mary sold this piece of land to the Church of the Nazarene, which had organized just a short time earlier, for \$1500. In the deed it specified that this property was..."In trust, that said premises shall be used, kept, maintained, and disposed of, as a place of worship for the use of the ministry and membership of the Church of the Nazarene; subject to the doctrine, law, and usage of said church, as from time to time declared by the General Assembly of said church".

On April 13, 1944, the church acquired the adjoining property from Joseph and Sophia Hendricks. It was located to the north of the church's parsonage. This adjoining lot has a parcel 33 feet by 33 feet excepted from the transaction because it was owned by the town of Iberia and was the location of the town's old jailhouse. In 1908, David and Henrietta Farnham conveyed off this 33-foot square parcel to the Trustees of the Town Board of Iberia and thereupon was built the old concrete jailhouse. In 1954, the town of Iberia conveyed the old jail property to the trustees of the Nazarene Church who included Willard Duncan, Will Jarrett, and James Hendley. The real estate transaction was signed by Mayor Charles Abernathy of Iberia.

In the 1930s, under the pastorate of Rev. A. O. Shearrer, the first parsonage was built from native limestone. The old church was torn down in 1947 and the present church building was built and finished in 1949. The church was built of 130 tons of red granite rock that was quarried in Iron County, Missouri and hauled to Iberia for cutting and placed by talented stonemasons including my grandfather, Frank Smith, and his brother, Felix (Pea) Smith.

As I mentioned before, the old deserted jail still remains today....a historic place of confinement, condemnation, and calamities neighbored by a hallowed place of comfort, compassion, and Christians.....the Iberia Church of the Nazarene.