

Pleasant Grove Methodist Church

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**Dedication Sunday for county's oldest church**

**Lindsay McReynolds**  
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The oldest church organization in Putnam County will host a dedication day for its newest addition on Sunday, Nov. 28.

The Pleasant Grove Methodist Church, which was first known as the Rock Spring Episcopal Methodist Church, is located off Highway 70 in the Gentry Community in western Putnam County.

It was established in 1815, and its current building was constructed in 1917. The church began work on its new fellowship hall and education building 16 months ago and is celebrating the dedication of that building on Sunday with an open house from 2 to 4 p.m.

Sunday School begins at 10 a.m., and the worship service will begin at 11 a.m. with Pastor Bill Cowan.

A special preview of the children's ministry will be held at 3 p.m., with a reception to follow.

A more in-depth look at the church's history will be published in the Sunday's News Features section of the **Herald-Citizen**.

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**Putnam's Oldest**



By horseback, by ox cart, by wagon, they came for two-week camp meetings at Rock Spring and Pleasant Grove in the early 1800's - - the longest-lasting church organization in Putnam County.

The original building doesn't exist anymore but a small church on Highway 70 in the far western end of Putnam County represents the oldest church organization in the county.

Pleasant Grove Methodist Church was first organized in 1815 as the Rock Spring Episcopal Methodist Church, not far from where the present brick church sits.

It was named “Rock Spring” because of a large spring flowing between two large rocks at the head of Rock Spring Valley, according to the *History of Pleasant Grove Church* by **Pearl H. Ensor**.

Mrs. Ensor was the mother of Cookeville resident and **Putnam County Historian Maurine Patton**, who is the oldest member of Pleasant Grove Methodist.

Patton, who was born the same year that the current building was constructed in 1917, said the church sanctuary remains very similar to the way she remembers it through the years.

“It’s very much like it was when I was a child, except there was no carpet, just hardwood,” said Patton, a member of the church for 75 years.

The first church services were held in the homes of families living near the spring, which was located in Jackson County at the time.

“Two-week camp meetings were held near this spring every year, and people came from miles away to attend these services,” according to the Ensor history. “They traveled by horseback, ox carts and in wagons. They brought provisions, stock feed and stayed the entire two weeks.

“The people of this community were so interested in the Lord’s work that they decided to build a church house,” wrote Ensor of the first church building constructed in 1832.

The land was donated by **John Boyd and his son, Ephriam Boyd**, and the deed was made to the following trustees: Simon Carlisle, Wesley Carlisle, Isaac E. Ferrell, **Joseph Jared**, Saunders Presley, James Lee Jr. and William Blackburn.

After the church was built, it was also used as a school, and a grove of large beech trees nearby prompted the name change from Rock Spring to Pleasant Grove Methodist Church.

In 1898, the trustees of Pleasant Grove Methodist Church bought some land on Old Walton Road, the same or similar route now followed by US 70-North, from R. B. and Ruth R. Gentry for \$25, according to Ensor’s book.

That deed was made to the following trustees: Joseph Holladay, W. A. Holladay, W. A. Ensor, B. F. Huddleston, W. J. Huddleston, L. T. Leftwich and David Nichols.

The sanctuary of the church remains much as it was in 1917, and church members are currently celebrating a new addition that includes a fellowship hall and education department. Members have been working on the new addition for the past 16 months and are to dedicate it in a service and open house today.

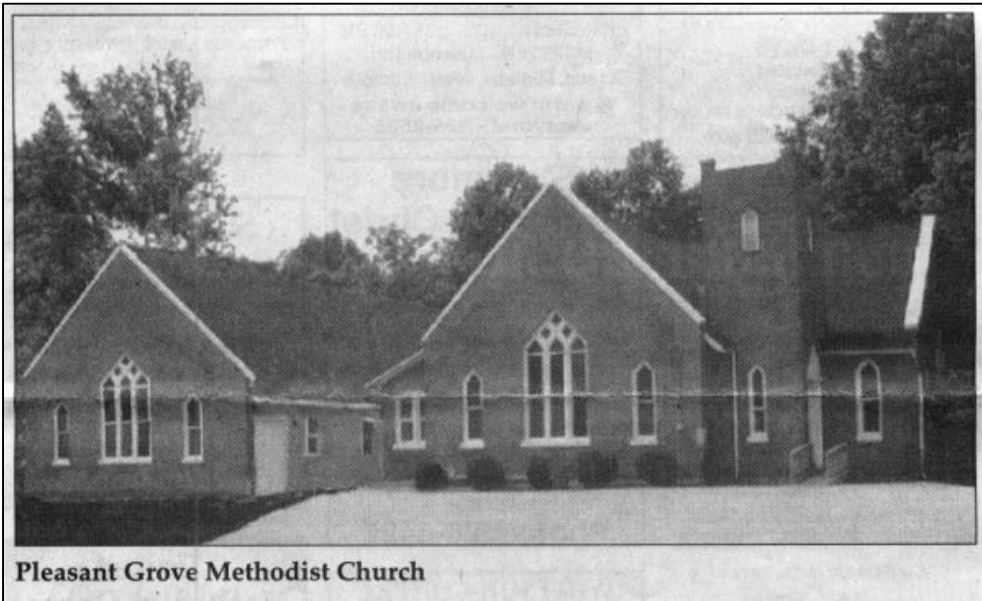
Pleasant Grove pastor Bill Cowan said the church has about 76 members and more than 60 who come regularly.

“We’ve got a lot of young families here,” Rev. Cowan said.

“About half the people who come are kids,” said Maurine Patton.

Her mother’s book on the history of Pleasant Grove Methodist, written years before her death in 1981, is due to be published later this year.

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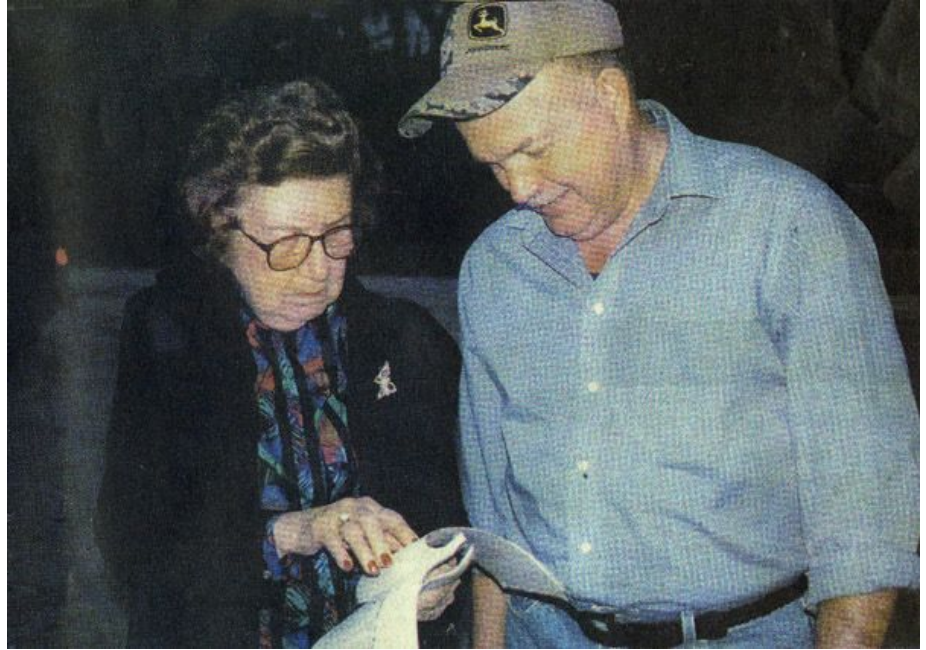


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Except for the red carpet and the public address system, the sanctuary of Pleasant Grove Methodist, west of Cookeville on US 70-North in the “lower end” of Putnam County, today looks much as it did when built 87 years ago in 1917.

Maurine Patton, whose mother wrote a history of Pleasant Grove Methodist, looks through church records with the minister, The Rev. Bill Cowan. Mrs. Patton is the official Putnam County historian, well known for her genealogical research and cemetery censuses.



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