

**Salem Baptist Church (Black), Clanton  
By Derric Scott  
2021**

From newspaper research and other sources.

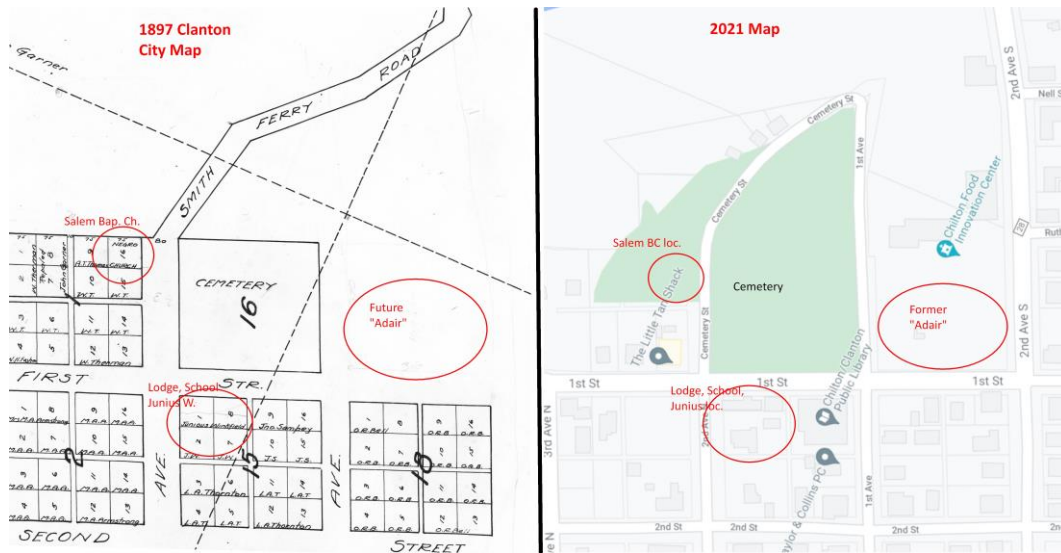
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# Salem Baptist Church (Black), Clanton

## By Derric Scott

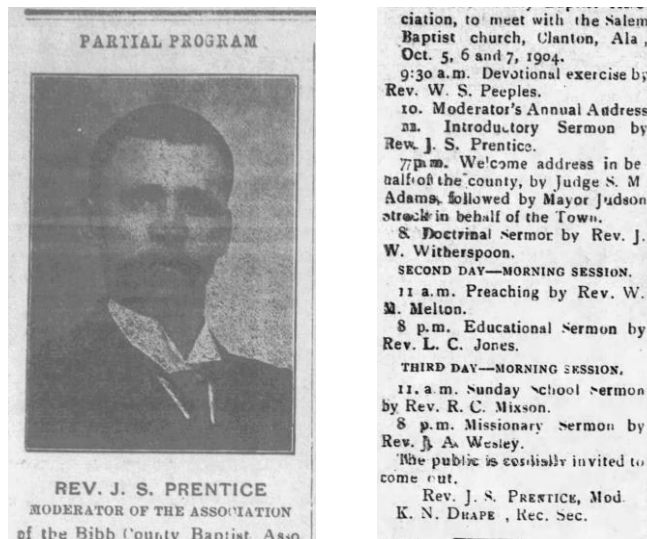
The Salem Baptist Church (black), Clanton was a very old church in Clanton. The Clanton Study Club's "A History of Chilton County," written in 1927, says that "from the beginning of Clanton history, the Negro Baptist had a church across the street from the Clanton Cemetery, on the east side." Specifically, the Salem Baptist Church (black) in Clanton was located on the north side of 2nd Avenue North, facing the Clanton Cemetery. That particular lot is now part of the Cemetery itself on the northeast side of the road.

The earliest contemporary document found so far is the 1897 Clanton map which has a "Negro Church" on that spot. However it doesn't list the name of the church.



1897 Clanton map (left) and modern map (right)

The first mention by name found so far is on October 6, 1904 when the Bibb County Baptist Association is meeting at the church and their program is listed in the newspaper. The program mentions Rev. J. S. Prentice, Rev. R. C. Mixon, and others. Remarkably, this 1904 article in The Banner features a photo of Rev. Prentice!



The Banner, 19041006UB

In these early days of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the residences of the black population in Clanton were distributed all around the town. There was a significant black population living in the area near Clanton Cemetery. The census records indicated that groups of black families lived along 1<sup>st</sup> Street and along 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North. A black Lodge and

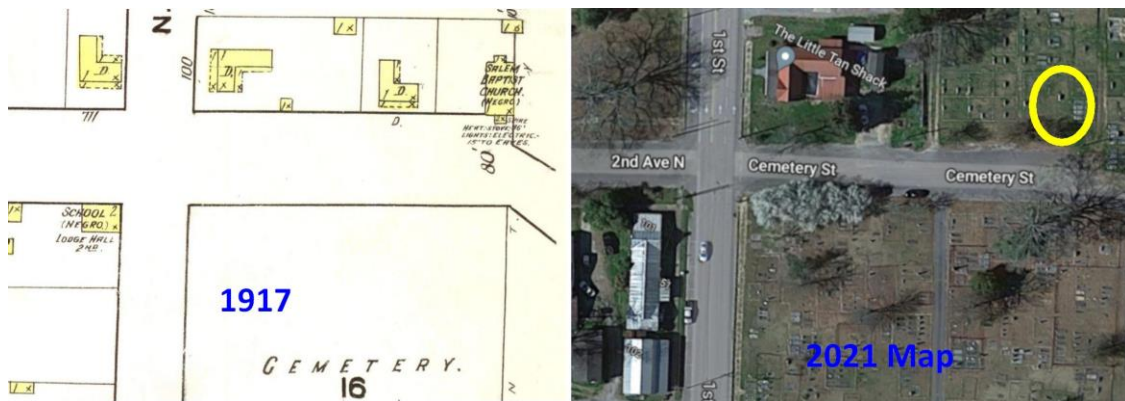
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a school were located at the southwest corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North, and the well-known and well-liked former slave Junius Winkfield and his wife Mary lived and owned property across from the Cemetery.

On the 1917 Sanborn map the church was named specifically – “Salem Baptist Church (Negro).” In the expanded view of the 1917 church image there was a lot of information on the building. It was wood framed (yellow), one story (tiny 1 in the corner) building, with a one story porch on the back, a singled roof (the 'X'), and a 2 story (36? foot) "spire" in the front center. It was heated by a stove and the lights were electric (in 1917) and it was 15' to the eaves. These details were practically the same on the 1928 Sanborn map.



Expansion of Salem Baptist Church graphic in 1917 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps showing building details.



1917 Sanborn map (left) and modern map (right). Circle indicates approx. church location today.

Rev. Robert Christopher (R. C.) Mixon became pastor of Salem Baptist Church in 1905.

About 1915-1917 a new church was formed on the "west side" and was called Friendship Baptist Church. In 1925-1926 the Salem Baptist Church consolidated with the Friendship Baptist Church and moved to the Friendship Church location on Liberty Street. The newly consolidated church was named Union Baptist Church, which it still is today. Considering that the churches merged together, the name “Union” makes perfect sense!

Rev. Mixon continued as the pastor of Union Baptist Church until 1950.

The move and consolidation of the Salem Baptist Church loosely coincided with the movement of the black population from the east side of town to the new communities being developed on the west side of town: “Liberty Town” and the “Wade Addition” and others.

When Salem Baptist Church moved, in June 1926 the old Salem church building was sold to the Church of God in Christ (“better known as the ‘Temple’”). On the 1928 Sanborn map the church building was named the Holiness Church. Later, at least by 1929, the "Holiness" church had become the local "Foursquare Church" and remained so for some years. Sometime later, perhaps in the 1940s, the church lot and a few around it were added to the Clanton Cemetery in, apparently, the Sandlin Addition.

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1928 Sanborn map (left), modern map (right). Circle indicates location of church.

It is important to note that the Salem Baptist Church (black) in Clanton is not to be confused with the **Salem Missionary Baptist Church** which was located near the Coosa River, northeast of Verbena. That Salem was flooded by the building of Mitchell Dam and was dissolved just before on October 22, 1921. Its members went to various nearby church congregations.

## References

**Union Banner:**

**A History of Chilton County, Clanton Study Club, 1927:**