

# Montevallo

## Historical Society<sup>SM</sup>

*Opening the Portals of Our Heritage*

540 Shelby Street  
Montevallo, AL 35115  
[www.historicmontevallo.org](http://www.historicmontevallo.org)



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### BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES

*Submitted by Marty Everse*

In the northeastern corner of Shoal Creek Park lies a solitary grave marker meticulously carved by Miller & Hurd, proprietors of the Talladega Marble Quarry, in December 1839. Chiseled into the stone are the words, "SACRED to the memory of ELIZABETH LAWLER who died on the 26th March 1826. As a tribute of affection, this is erected by her grandson Levi W. Lawler." Beside it, hand-made bricks have been stacked in recent years gathered from the ground around. Nearby crude hewn lime rocks jut from the soil or are found haphazardly piled and along with a few scattered depressions in the earth mark the graveyard of what once was the Shoal Creek Church, the first Baptist church in Shelby County.

The initial owner of the land where the church stood and the Perry-Mahler house now stands was the widow Rhoda Maroney. In November 1816, her husband, Isaac, "being sick and weak in body but of perfect mind and memory" left his wife money to purchase two quarter sections of land. When the land became available to purchase, Rhoda bought the property that encompasses the Shoal Creek Park today. She held on to it until 1826 when she sold all but 3 acres to Edmund King. Those three acres she had previously deeded to "Moses Crowson & others composing the Baptist Society of Shoal Creek Church." When King sold the land to Jacob Perry in 1851, he exempted those same 3 acres for the exclusive use of the Shoal Creek Baptist Church and house for the purpose of religious worship.

Most sources place the establishment of the Shoal Creek Church in 1820 with Moses Crowson serving as its first preacher. During his tenure, in 1825, a great revival was held resulting in 35 or 40 sinners being immersed in the cool waters of the nearby creek. In 1830, he moved to Tennessee with his new bride, Rhoda Maroney now Crowson. Following Moses, Joab "Buck" Lawler assumed the pastoral duties until 1834. During his tenure, a large Sunday school was formed which held forth during the spring and summer but backslid during the winter because the log church building was a bit airy. In addition to attending the spiritual needs of the community, Joab served in the state legislature and was eventually elected to Congress in 1835. He was reelected in 1837 and then promptly died of "bilious pleurisy" in May of 1838 and was buried in the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D. C.

While Joab was attending the Shoal Creek Church, he was ordained there in 1828, his mother, Elizabeth Lawler died. She was just 52. Joab's son, Levi W. Lawler, was a 10 year old boy at the time and must have been close



*Sources indicate that the Shoal Creek Church was constructed of logs and probably resembled the Claybank Church near Ozark in Dale County, Alabama.*

to his grandmother and later as a young man in Talladega felt the need for a "tribute of affection." He was fond of his grandfather, Levi Robbin Lawler who died in 1836, also. He erected a similar style marker over his grave at Mardisville near Talladega at the same time.

The Shoal Creek congregation labored in the vineyard without a neighborhood rival for Baptist souls until 1855 when a church was constituted in the town of Montevallo composed primarily of members from the Shoal Creek flock. A year before that event, however, the women of Shoal Creek were praised by the Shelby Baptist Association: "Resolved, that we are highly gratified to learn that a female missionary society to promote domestic missions has been formed by the sisters of Shoal Creek Church, and we recommend the formation of similar societies by all others who desire the promotion of Christ's kingdom."

Eventually, another church was formed in the Dogwood community farther north of Montevallo, and the Shoal Creek Baptist Church was dissolved on December 19, 1857. Whether the split in the original church was caused by a doctrinal dispute or geographic convenience is an open question.

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Montevallo Historical Society's  
First Annual Gala

*Gala 2019*

Italian Feast

Evening at the Fox & Pheasant Inn

October 5