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2021

### News Clipping - Rev. John Ruppe

Paul L. McCraw

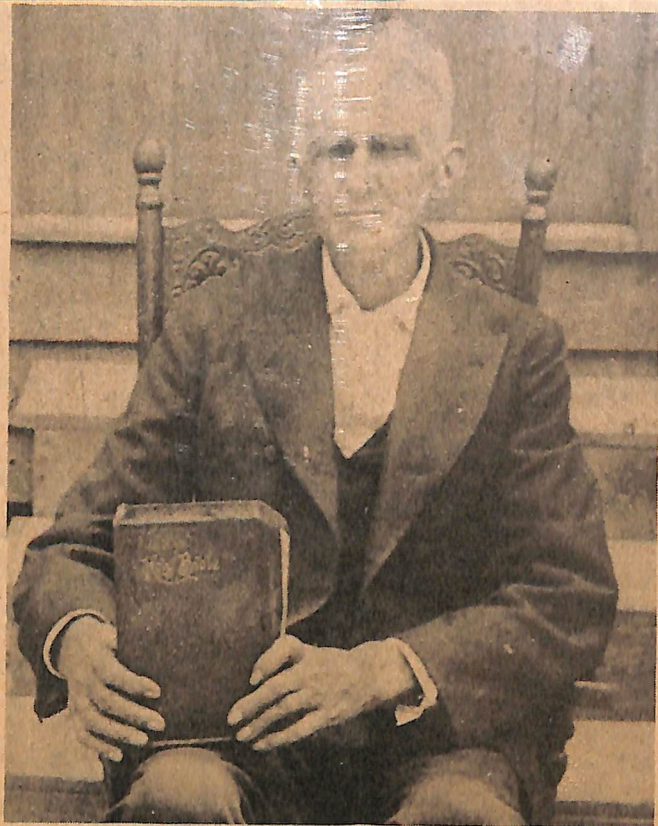
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## Rev. John Ruppe

# *Country Prea*

by Paul L. McCraw

One person who had a great impact on the Cleveland County area was the Rev. John Ruppe, a country preacher and farmer.

Although not liscensed to preach until he was 50 years old he was influential in founding two churches, preaching at many churches throughout the area, and marrying close to a 1,000 couples.

As a farmer he maintained a 450-acre family farm without the help of mechanized equipment, and operated a community store.

John Ruppe was born to Henry and Polly Wilson Ruppe April 11, 1823, in the Mt. Pleasant community of Rutherford, now Cleveland County. At the age of 26 he married Anna McCraw also of Cleveland County, and two years later he bought 207 acres of land bordering the state line in Spartanburg, now Cherokee County.

He built a house a few 100 feet from the state line. The

farm gradually increased to about 450 acres and the Ruppes and their six children farmed most of it growing cotton as the primary money crop. Corn and small grains were planted for bread and for feeding the livestock. Mr. Ruppe gained prominence as a champion fodder puller.

One day in May, 1870, a friend passed by his house and invited Mr. Ruppe to go with him on the following day to a revival at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church. He declined the invitation saying that he had no clothes sufficient to wear.

His wife Anna volunteered to prepare suitable clothes for him, and on the following day he went with his friend to Mt. Pleasant.

He joined the church for the first time that day at age 47. Just over three years later Mt. Pleasant Church liscensed him to preach occasionally.

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Rev. John Ruppe

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In 1879 he was instrumental

in the establishment of Cherokee Creek Baptist Church two miles south of his home. He became the new church's first pastor and served for some two years during which time the church grew to a membership of 85.

He was ordained May 6, 1881, and from 1883 he served as pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Rutherford County. Again in 1886 he served as pastor of Cherokee Creek Church.

Rev. Ruppe continued to preach in churches in Cleveland, Rutherford and Cherokee Counties. On many occasions he walked for miles to preach at a weekday service when the mule or horse he usually rode was needed on the farm.

Much of his payment for preaching came in the form of food items, and rarely did he receive more than a dollar in money. On one occasion after having walked for several miles to preach his total payment

was only 10 cents which he graciously returned to the church requesting that it be given to the fund for widows and orphans.

Because Rev. Ruppe's house stood just inside South Carolina where marriage laws were less involved, many couples from Cleveland and neighboring counties walked or rode horses, mules, and buggies to his home for a quick wedding.

Even at a time when the population of the area was sparse and when transportation was poor, he married close to a 1,000 couples in some 25 to 30 years. The couples took their vows in his parlor, rose garden, on the porch, or even in their buggy. Most grooms paid Rev. Ruppe a dollar for the service.

In the summer of 1899 he and his wife Ann participated in a brush arbor revival at Cobb School in the western part of No. 1 Township of Cleve-

land County. The township had only one church, Camp's Creek Baptist, at that time, and Christians felt that another church was needed in the area.

Out of the fervor of the brush arbor revival plans for a new church developed. The area was so large and those expressing the need for a new church lived over so large an area that two churches were eventually established.

On Sept. 22, 1899, Prospect Baptist Church was established by residents west of Ashworth Creek. One week later, Sept. 29, 1899, under the direction of Rev. Ruppe, Lavonia Baptist Church was established.

His wife Ann died Nov. 26, 1900. He survived until Dec. 9, 1910, and continued to preach occasionally at the monthly meetings of the church, his final sermon being delivered while he sat in a chair on the raised pulpit.