

Rev. Hugh Quinn
First Pastor of First Baptist Church, Rome

Reverend Hugh Quinn was born on January 12, 1785, one of seven children of Peter Quinn, Sr., and his wife Judith. Peter Quinn, Sr., was born in 1750 in Northern Ireland and was listed as an Irish Protestant. Today, we would refer to him as an Ulster Scot. Peter was present in the Carolina colonies by the Revolution years, and though listed as a Loyalist, he would later sign the oath of loyalty to the fledgling United States. His wife, Judith Robinson Quinn, was later honored by the McComb, Mississippi, Daughters of the American Revolution in naming their local chapter for her. The Quinns lived near the North Carolina/South Carolina line, and both states have been listed as their home.

At the age of 44, Hugh Quinn moved from North Carolina in 1829 (some accounts give the year as 1834) to be a missionary to the Cherokee at Haweis Mission Station, called Turnip Town by the Cherokee. He and his wife joined and a few years later replaced the missionary Rev. Elizur Butler, who with his wife Ester ministered to the Cherokee from 1821 until his departure with the Native Americans during or before the Removal, probably about 1832/33.

The Quinns took over the domestic training of the students, to allow the Butlers to assume the teaching responsibilities of the mission. Both men were also medical doctors. So many families from North Carolina followed the Quinns, the area became known as the North Carolina district, now known as Coosa. (Ester Butler is buried in a marked grave a half mile from Pisgah Church, in the shadow of old Plant Hammond.)

Butler, along with Rev. Worcester and nine other missionaries to the Cherokee, were charged and arrested when they refused to leave work in the Cherokee Nation in Georgia and were tied by the neck, force-marched next to a guard on horseback, imprisoned, found guilty, and placed in a hard-labor camp at the new state prison at Milledgeville. They were eventually released after a long legal appeal by attorneys hired by the Cherokee Nation and by the American Board of Commissioners of the Foreign Mission Society. This legal decision was used in ground-breaking law governing tribal sovereignty and finally enforced in the 20th century. (See Worcester v. Georgia, 1832). Of the eleven men, only seven were

named in the Supreme Court case. Quinn might have been one of the unnamed four.

After Rev. Butler's departure, Rev. Quinn focused his attention on his work with the white settlers of what would become Pisgah Baptist Church on Georgia Highway 20. Quinn founded Pisgah Church and served that church twice, returning to serve after a pastor died. After the first Pisgah pastorate, he resigned in favor of Rev. Humphrey Posey, who would later pastor First Baptist from 1843-44. Posey also served as a missionary to the Cherokee in northwest Georgia and in western North Carolina. It is likely that in between the Pisgah pastorates, Quinn and his wife became charter members of First Baptist, Rome, joining on May 16, 1835. He probably became pastor then or shortly after.

According to Robert A. Gardener, "His work would necessitate his coming the ten miles into town for preaching on the second or third Sunday and the conference the day before. When he and Mrs. Quinn removed their letters about August 1836, presumably his pastorate was concluded. For reasons that are no longer clear, (Ed. Note: Quinn had resigned at Pisgah) he returned his letter to the Rome church in 1837, probably retaining his membership there until 1846. At that time, he moved to Mississippi, where he practiced medicine and preached until his death in 1864." Interesting that church was held once a month, with a church conference held on the Saturday before.

In 1845/46, Rev. Quinn and his wife moved to Mississippi to join his siblings and the extended family, some of whom had been there for generations. His parents were the first to move in 1812 to a farm on the Bogue Chitto River at Holmesville, near McComb, and all but one of his siblings moved to Mississippi. It is likely Quinn was ready to join the security of family and begin his last phase of life at the age of 60. He founded one more church there, Palo Alto Baptist in Clay County. Perhaps some of his children joined him. He had eight children of his own. Three children are buried in the Rome area. Two are buried at Sardis Cemetery and one is buried at Cave Springs Cemetery. All three died as young adults, the last an unmarried daughter, aged 21, who died in 1845, perhaps prompting their plans to move from Georgia.

The extended Quinn family in Mississippi would go on to have significant influence in that state, serving in numerous state and public offices in Pike,

Lawrence, Scott, and Rankin counties. A family member, Percy Edward Quinn, was a Mississippi congressman for whom Percy Quin State Park is named. Rev. Hugh Quinn died April 23, 1864, in Palo Alto, Clay County, Mississippi, at the advanced age of 79.

These people of God were called to the ultimate test and our nation is still reaping the rewards of their perseverance today.

*The name "Quinn" is spelled with one "n" in several historical articles. For our purposes, we have spelled it one way throughout this article.