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Sounding Out the Word (Apr 1963)

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Two Christian sisters whose hearts were exercised by the Lord, a brother distributing tracts in a new community, and others working together — these were the instruments used of God to start a children's work which later developed into an assembly with a Gospel outreach that still goes on today.

Little is known about Mrs. Elizabeth Dupree. She was trained to be a missionary to China; for some reason, however, she served the Lord among the Indians of western United States instead. In the late years of her life, she came to Houston, Texas and became a jail matron witnessing for the Lord through the opportunities thus afforded. When she could no longer do this, a brother in the Lord helped her build a small house in South Houston. Here she continued to do what she could for the Lord, gathering children in from the neighbourhood and teaching them the Word of God.

These events took place in the depression years of 1930 to 1934. During this time Mr. Robert Thompson, while visiting in Houston, drove down to South Houston to give out tracts from door to door. He came to Mrs. Dupree's door, and as they met, they found they had a common interest in trying to reach children with the Gospel. She invited Mr. Thompson to come back that afternoon and speak to a class of children she was expecting. Later on, he held children's meetings each night in Mrs. Dupree's yard. As a result of these meetings, regular Bible classes on Sunday afternoons were started and carried on for several years in Mrs.

Dupree's home by Christians from Houston. During this time, Mr. Thompson returned for more children's meetings in a tent by her house. Mr. Robert Curry and others conducted Gospel meetings in a tent at the same location.

In 1935, Mrs. Dupree went home to be with the Lord leaving her property to be used for the furtherance of the Gospel in South Houston. Those responsible for the use of the property invited the Robert Thompson family to move into Mrs. Dupree's house and continue the work already started. They moved from San Antonio to South Houston in 1937.

A short time later, Ruth Thompson, a daughter, brought a friend home from school. This little girl told Mrs. Thompson she had "joined the church" the Sunday before. Mrs. Thompson questioned her but found she knew nothing about the truth of salvation through the Saviour. This so distressed Mrs. Thompson that it caused her to gather in a few children to teach them the Word of God. This began with six in her living room, but the number and interest grew quickly, so that more room was needed. The garage was cleaned out, painted inside and fitted for this use.

When the attendance reached forty-eight, Mrs. Thompson called for help from Christians in nearby Houston. Four or five responded, and working together, carried on this Monday afternoon Bible School in the Thompson garage for a period of ten years with a regular attendance of fifty to sixty boys and girls.

Another opening in South Houston occurred in 1946. Several Christian ladies from a church met Mr. Robert Curry in the Bible Book Store in Houston and asked him

for the name of someone to help them with a Bible Study. When he learned they lived in and near South Houston, he put them in touch with Mrs. Thompson. A regular ladies' Bible class resulted. When their husbands also became interested, they requested a class for both men and women to be held at night. About this time, Mr. and Mrs. B. S. Avenell moved to South Houston to help with the new opportunities. By October, 1947, weekly Bible readings were being held on Wednesday nights in the Avenell home. From twenty to thirty adults attended regularly and several were received into fellowship at the Louisiana Street assembly as a result. Since all of these drove quite a distance to Houston in order to be at the regular assembly meetings, they were exercised about securing property and having a building for meetings in South Houston.

The original property belonging to Mrs. Dupree was sold, and the proceeds from this sale became the first funds to be set aside for the new building. In February, 1948, two lots were purchased and plans drawn for a modest building. Construction was started in the summer. On Sunday, September 26, 1948, the first meeting was held in the South Houston Bible Chapel. With the ones that lived in the area, and a few who drove down from Houston to help in the work —mostly those who had been assisting during the previous ten years — the number in fellowship totaled about thirty-five.

In 1956, some from South Houston started a new work in the MacGregor area of Houston, yet the work in South Houston continued to prosper. In 1958, the original building was enlarged to provide a larger assembly room and more Sunday School rooms. In

addition to the regular meetings about eighty or more children still gather on Monday afternoons — a continuation of the work started so many years ago in the Thompson garage.