

In 1858 the McEwens moved to Florida, likely, Lake City, as during the Civil War, William Alexander McEwen, the eldest son, enlisted at Lake City as a private on February 11, 1863 in Company E, 9th Florida Regiment, Confederate States Army. In May 1864 the 9th Florida was sent to Richmond, Virginia. Private McEwen was captured on April 6, 1865 near Appomattox. Imprisoned at Newport News, he was unable to leave when his comrades were freed in June as he was sick in a hospital. In July 1865 he was released and was accompanied home by John W. Whidden, former captain of Company E, 7th Florida, C. S. A. It is interesting to note that Capt. Whidden's home was then at Fort Hartsuff.

In 1867, possibly attracted by Capt. Whidden's earlier praise of his home, the McEwen family resettled about a mile and a half south of present day Wauchula at the site of old Fort Hartsuff. William McEwen was listed in township 34 in the 1870 Manatee County Census.

William P. McEwen was a circuit riding Methodist preacher. His coming was greatly welcomed by the Rev. John W. Hendry, a Baptist minister. W. D. Payne in his booklet on the Rev. Hendry wrote:

The consecration and unbounded enthusiasm of this saintly man of God did much to encourage Bro. Hendry in the prosecution of his arduous work. Traveling together over the same roads, preaching from the same pulpits, sharing the same perils and hardships, there sprang up between them a mutual love and close friendship seldom, if ever, met with between ministers of different denominations. Indeed, it may be said that no Baptist preacher has ever filled a larger place in the affections of Bro. Hendry than did this Godly man.

An example of this cooperation is cited by Tommy Underwood in A Brief History of the First Baptist Church, Wauchula, Florida, which was founded in 1876:

Often, Rev. J. W. Hendry, the first pastor of Ft. Hartsuff Church, would travel many miles to be with his small congregation. After Rev. Hendry preached at Fort Hartsuff for several Sundays, the church may have been without a pastor for several weeks. Then, Rev. McEwen, the Methodist preacher, would be in the pulpit. Both the Baptists and Methodists apparently had no problem with their respective groups.

Fort Hartsuff Baptist Church later became the First Baptist Church of Wauchula.

The following article appeared in the October 31, 1912 edition of the Florida Christian Advocate:

Long before DeSoto County appeared upon the map, while this great section belonged to Manatee, we find