

Wilson, Donald L

From: Wilson, Donald L
Sent: Wednesday, September 13, 2006 8:34 PM
To: 'CFRSRV@aol.com'
Subject: RE: Bacon Race (Oak Grove) Church

Bill - After talking to you last night I finally went back to my file to dig out the material I have on Bacon Race Church.

The article I mentioned to you is taken from *"Folk Lore" of Early Settlers of American and Their Ancestral Lineage ...* written and compiled by W. R. Morris, Foggy Camp Farm, Fancy Gap, Carroll County, Virginia, vol. 3 (1958).

[Pages 189-192]

"OCCOQUAN MEETING HOUSE" In Prince William County, Va.

Prince William Co., Va., was organized in 1730 from Stafford and King George Counties. The Union soldiers had possession of the court house at Bentville [sic], during the Civil War and a part of the recors disappeared at that time; there are old deeds dating ack to 1720 [sic]. The first wills 1734. The marriage reocords begins 1764 [sic, actually begin 1864]. The Marriage bonds and other records prior to this time were either lost, stolen or destroyed. There may be in some of the old order books appointing trustees for Occoquan Meeting House; they are not indexed and time would not permit me to go through them.

I learned from Elder W. M. Smoot, the present pastor (1936) of Occoquan Meeting House, and also editor of their church paper; the church was organized in 1774 and that on the one hundredth anniversary Elder Smoot became its pastor. Who the leaders or its first trustees were, the present pastor or trustees have no record. From other records, Hammond Morris, John Peake, John Hampton, and Nicholas Anderson must have been the principal leaders.

They are known as the "Old School Baptist." There has been three divisions since its organization. In 1832 there was a division and the two factions became know as the old and the new. In 1889 there was another division and they entered into an organizataion of the Virginia Annual Meeting; which meeting was organized by the church in the Occoquan Meeting House. An article of this meeting reads as follows: "We cannot received into our fellowship any person who is a member of any secret or oath bound organization. We have nothing to say for or against such institutions among men and nature, but we believe every person among such organization who has been ex-perimentally brought ot know the truth, and who seek membership in the visible church of God, should first leave such connections, and thus be separated from all men made institutions. Whether religious or otherwise; for "Israel" shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Num. 23:9.

In 1903 they again declared non-fellowship with its members who belonged to the labor union ...

They do not address their pastor as Reverend, but as Elder, and their house of worship, a meeting place for the church.

Their first past was Elder David Thomas. How long he served is not known for the early records of the church book have been torn out. ...

[In 1813] Occoquan belonged to the Kectocon Association; which they had joined in 1776. Occoquan has been the birth place of two associations. It derived its name from the beautiful stream nearby "Occoquan River;" was one of the boundary lines of the parcel of land bought by Hammond Morris 1761. ...

There has been three church buildings erected where the present church now stands, it being one hundred years since it was built (1836), and is in fairly good condition. The meeting house and cemetery inclosed by an iron picket fence. I was there June 26, 1936 and found cemetery and church lot clean. Duing the Civil War this meeting house was used by Wade Hampton for a hospital for southern soldiers.

Do you still want a photocopy of the applicable pages extracted above?

The author of the above was a descendant of one of the founders of the church, Hammond Morris (1733-1810), and the book contains a fair amount about the Morris family. The way I read that last paragraph, the present church (1936) had

been standing for a hundred years, and there were two other churches on the same lot prior to that. He claims that the church was organized in 1774. The first document we have directly associated with the congregation is the 1776 petition of Baptists of Prince William County. That church was the only Baptist church within Prince William County at that date, and all the signators of the petition lived in its vicinity. The most accessible copy of the petition is published in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 18 (1910), p. 38-39. (It's also been reprinted elsewhere.)

"The petition of a Baptist Church at Occoquan Pr. William County hereby sheweth, that whereas this Colony with others, is now contending for the civil rights & liberties of making the enslaving schemes of a powerful Enemy. ..." They ask
"1. That we be allowed to worship God in our own way, without interruption.
"2. That we be permitted to maintain our own Ministers &c. and no others.
"3. That we and our friends who desire it, may be married, buried and the like, without paying the Parsons of any other denomination. These things granted, we will gladly unite with our Brethren of other denominations, and to the utmost of our ability promote the common cause of Freedom, always praying for your welfare & success.
"Signed in behalf of the Church, this 19th day of May 1776, by us ... [49 signatures]."

Before 1774, the only Baptist Churches in the area of Prince William County were at Broad Run in Fauquier County (organized 1762) and at Chappawamsic in Stafford County (organized 1766). Some members of the Occoquan congregation may have belonged to Chappawamsic before 1774 since it was the closest available.

Would be interested in knowing how early the records are that Mrs. Alexander has.

According to *A Guide to Church Records in the Library of Virginia* (2nd ed., Richmond, 2002), p. 23, the state library has:

OCOQUAN CHURCH, PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY

This church was organized in 1776 as a branch of Chappawamsic Church. During the dissension of the 1830s and 1840s, it became "Old School." Occoquan Church is now extinct.

Minute Book, 1794-1831, 1841-1843. 1 volume (53 leaves), negative photostats. (Accession 20989)
Contains minutes that cover the periods 29 May 1794- [15] October 1831 and 17 April 1841-18 February 1843. The very early years are missing as well as those for the period 1831-1841. The few years at the end are incomplete. Membership lists appear on pages I (1815-1821), 77, and 78 (1825).

[20989 is possibly a microfilm number. Don't know if it can be borrowed on interlibrary loan. The original book is supposedly in private hands, apparently those of a member of the church.]

Some of the records have been published: "Occoquan Baptist Church, Prince William County: Various lists of members, selected and abstracted from the church minutes [1794-1825], in *Northern Virginia Genealogy*, vol. 2, no. 2 (April 1997), p. 68-72. Some of the earliest minutes show that the church accepted people of color, even slaves, as members.

If you can find Association records, they might show you activities of the church during periods that local minutes do not exist. The local minutes (which are missing for 1836) might give some insight into the construction of the first two church, or at least indicate that no building activity was going on at certain times.

My best guess is that the first meeting house may have been put up shortly after the group organized. If they had 49 members in 1776 they must have had somewhere to meet besides a member's living room. The second church may have been built about the time the 3 acres was donated to the Baptist Society by Samuel and Mary Jackson (1798). Actually, the wording of the deed implies that the Meeting House was already standing on the property at that time. [Deed Book Z, p. 295, from abstract by Ruth and Sam Sparacio]

There are probably contemporary official reports or memoirs about the Civil War action at Bacon Race Church. Most of what I can immediately put my hands on is written long after the fact. Joseph Mills Hanson, *Bull Run Remembers ... The History, Traditions, and Landmarks of the Manassas (Bull Run) Campaigns Before Washington, 1861-1862* (1951, reprinted 1991 by PWC Historical Commission) has several pages which refer to Bacon Race Church: "Small War on the Occoquan," pages 56-63, describes the activities of Wade Hampton in the area around Bacon Race. Hanson has reconstructed Hampton's itinerary from official reports so it looks pretty reliable.

That's about all I can do for you at this time. Let me know if you have other particular questions.

Don

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-----Original Message-----

From: CFRSRV@aol.com [mailto:CFRSRV@aol.com]
Sent: Monday, July 31, 2006 3:00 PM
To: Wilson, Donald L; RELIC
Subject: Bacon Race (Oak Grove) Church

Don:

I have interest in learning more about the Bacon Race Church. I have the entry the PW Historical Commission publication "Prince William: A Past to Preserve".

I also have a Potomac News item, June 21, 1990, authored by Jim Rogers, in which he states that you have "...researched the origins of the church as well as the unusual name it bears". He also refers to the deed that you found that deeded the three acre Bacon Race property from Samuel Jackson to the Baptist Society in 1798. I note that "the Meeting House" was referenced in defining the property in the deed, thus a "meeting house" or church predated the 1798 deed. There is also opinion of Jack Ratcliff, stating that the property may have been used for a church since before 1794. There also has been a suggestion that the original meeting house may have been pre revolutionary.

Apparently the original structure, a meeting house or Church, was the one referred to in the civil war records as being used as a supply depot in 1862 (Wade Hampton) and 1863 (Major S.D. Lee). The original structure apparently was not present when the Church was built by the followers of William Smoot in 1880. The 1880 church collapsed on December 24 or 25, 1987.

Have you found records earlier than the 1788 deed? Do you think that the accounts as summarized above accurate?

I hope to be able to catalogue the grave markers, perhaps by Eagle Scout project.

Any information, opinions or links that you have would be appreciated.

Sincerely:

Bill Olson
703 590 7337