

# He's promised to return to old Bacon Race Church

By EILEEN MEAD

Followers of Elder W.M. Smoot of Bacon Race Church have respected his deathbed wish that no one else be allowed to preach in the church because he planned to return someday.

Smoot died in 1938 and is buried in the churchyard. Now many of those who waited for his return are buried by his side, but still the church waits.

The roof now has lost its shingles and the light and rain and snow filter through the large cracks to fall on the rotting family pews, built by each family which belonged to the church.

The clapboards of the building are now weatherbeaten and some are coming loose. To keep out vandals the windows were boarded up years ago. The paint

on the door is peeling and a "No Trespassing" sign attempts to keep visitors out.

The graveyard is kept up by families who have loved ones buried there and bright plastic flowers can be seen from the now well traveled Davis Ford Road.

Elder Smoot was considered to be an educated man who had a printing press in his home in Occoquan's Mt. High area. He was extremely strict, especially in his rules dealing with women in the congregation and his monthly church pamphlets which date at least from 1911 are filled with admonitions to his congregations.

One of his teachings was that no religious services were to be conducted at gravesides, so the caskets were brought into the church for services.

It is said that because of his request that no other pastor preach in the church, his own burial services were held outside, but not by his graveside.

The existing church is the second built on the site. The original Bacon Race Church was built in 1782 and is thought to be one of three churches of the Baptists of America constructed by Andrew Broaddus who lived from 1770 to 1848.

Civil War histories refer to the Bacon Race Church which was used as a supply depot of Col. Wade Hampton's brigade and the reserve position of Major S.D. Lee's battalion during the winter of 1861-62. The original church may have been burned.

The Smootite Church was placed in trusteeship in 1963

