

Va - Pr Wm - Churches

# Grace Chapel

## Historic landmark in danger of extinction

By JANET NEWCOMB

"AS TIME passes many landmarks disappear and eventually are wholly forgotten. Grace Chapel, better known as Ewell's Chapel, located near Hickory Grove in Prince William County, it is feared, may through some unforeseen circumstances fall into this category and may be remembered only as a former place of worship."

These thoughts were expressed in a booklet about Grace Chapel written by Mrs. Edmonia Taylor Sinclair with the help of Miss Charlotte Ewell and Mrs. Selina Taylor Wilson. Some 20 years have passed since Mrs. Sinclair wrote these words, and her fears may become a realization. Grace Chapel, because of neglect and vandalism, now faces possible dismantlement.

The Chapel is located on Carolina Road, off Route 15, at the entrance of Edge Hill, home of the Ewell family for several generations. It is situated on two half-acre lots. The lot on which it stands was donated by Squire Jessee Ewell, Jr. and his wife, Ellen MacGregor Ewell. The lot in front of the Chapel was purchased in 1860 by Sudley Methodist Church from Charles Vermillion. The original land was transferred to Trustees Alfred Ball, Alexander Compton, John Lewis, Benjamin T. Chinn and William H. Dogan upon the following trust:

"That they shall cause to be built thereon a home for public worship and religious instruction to be known by the name of Rescol Chapel for the use of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and when not in use by the ministers of said church the same shall be free for the use of any other Christian sect or church, excepting only as may be especially prohibited for the continuation of the aforesaid trustees or a majority of them."

**THE DEED** further provided for the continuation of trustees, if one or more died or moved, by authorizing the minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to call a meeting of remaining trustees and to appoint one or more persons to fill the vacated place. In this manner, there were five trustees at all times.

The transfer of land to the five trustees, which was recorded in the Prince William County Clerk's Office, bears the date of August 10, 1847. The deed was acknowledged by Jessee Ewell and his wife Ellen. Witnesses were Justices of the Peace James D.

Tennelle and George Tyler. There seem to be no records of any ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, who held services in Rescol Chapel. In 1884, St. Paul's Episcopal Church bought Rescol Chapel from Sudley Methodist Church for the price of \$50. It was at this time that the name was changed from Rescol Chapel to Grace Chapel.

It is felt, however, that the Episcopalians used the Chapel earlier. Miss Alice Maude Ewell, granddaughter to Jessee and Ellen Ewell, wrote in her book, "The Virginia Scene," that her Grandmother who was a staunch Episcopalian, taught Sunday School for the mountain folk and others at the Chapel before the War between the States.

After the War, she wrote, the Chapel was a semi-ruin, and the family had to travel eight miles to Haymarket to attend St. Paul's.

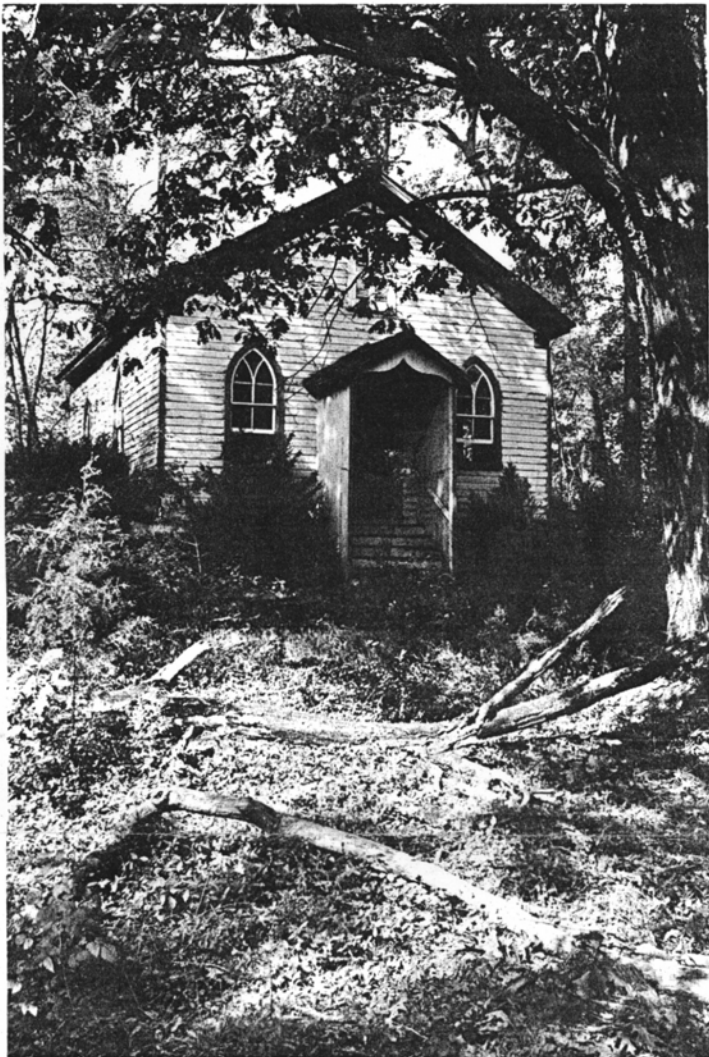
Church meant a great deal to the family, especially after the War, and with the aid and devotion of an ex-Confederate Clergyman, the Rev. John Ambler, there was a revival of work at the Chapel. Mr. Ambler was minister of St. Paul's from 1875 to 1881, and during his time the Chapel was repaired and restored and ended in becoming "an Episcopal Chapel of Ease to our historic Parish Church" (meaning St. Paul's). It was during this time that a cross was erected on top of the building. A gallery, which had originally been built to hold members of the Negro race was removed.

**THERE IS** no complete record of ministers who have served Grace Chapel; however, it seems certain that the Rectors of St. Paul's have also served there.

The Rev. John Ambler (1875-1881) is known to be the first Episcopal minister who served Grace Chapel. Other ministers were the Rev. Arthur P. Gray (1881-1888), the Rev. Thornton Byrd Turner (1889-1892), the Rev. Maurice Eagle (1913-1915), the Rev. Robert White (1915-1916), the Rev. Thomas Browne (1919-1922), the Rev. J.A.H. Bomberger (1923-1924), the Rev. W.A. Seeger (1926-1928), the Rev. W.F. Carpenter (1928-1950), the Rev. George Stokes (1950-1955), the Rev. J.M. Cobb (1959-1966). The last service held in the Chapel was in 1963 by Mr. Cobb.

The interior boards on the walls and ceiling are hand planed. In the early 1900's, the Chapel was re-weatherboarded and Gothic windows were installed. Over the window in the

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Grace Chapel when it was in use. The age of the photograph can be gauged by the size of the boxwoods, and by the fenders and running boards on the car.

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(Grace Chapel)

Prince William Public Library  
Manassas, Va.