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Ewell Chapel

VIRGINIANA FILE
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(Grace Chapel)

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SECOND OF TWO ARTICLES

Restoration Funds Are Needed

Editor's Note: This is the second of a two-part series on the restoration of Ewell's Grace Chapel, near Haymarket.

By TOMMYE S. BURTON
An estimated \$10,000 is needed to fully restore Ewell's Grace Chapel near Haymarket, which the Prince William Historical Commission has deemed an historically important structure.

The fund-raising campaign for the chapel's restoration is underway, sponsored by St. Paul's Episcopal Church which presently holds the property's deed.

Donations should be made to Grace Chapel Restoration Fund, Mrs. John Marsh, Treasurer, 6305 Catharpin Rd., Gainesville, Va. 22065. Donations are tax deductible.

The historical significance of Ewell's Chapel is its role in the Civil War. The simple structure was erected by a family descended of Virginia gentry, but of moderate means, during a time when travel to a church as far away as St. Paul's in Haymarket, eight miles was a trying ordeal.

Often the roads were mere ruts, dusty or deep in mud. Sometimes the snow was deep, the road blocked and fences buried.

The little building of frame construction is situated at the foot of the Bull Run Mountains, whose ruggedness made them practically inaccessible during that era. The mountains became a refuge for runaway slaves, redemptioners, ex-convicts and outlaws.

Two notable gaps at each end of the range was signal stations for the four years of the Civil War. It has been told that some climbed Bell Knob to watch the nearby Battle of Bull Run.

The chapel is in a grove of oak trees on what was then a part of the Old Carolina Road. The history of this trail began in 1662 with

Susquehannock Indians. It became commonly known as "Rogue's Road".

At the entrance to Edge Hill, home of Squire Jesse Ewell, the chapel, like many other churches, became a semi-ruin during the War Between the States. The entire area was a part of "Mosby's Confederacy".

Of all the irregulars engaged in guerrilla warfare, the most famous is probably John Singleton Mosby. He was in a different league from Quantrill and his Raiders and some of the others who plundered and reaped scorn.

Mosby was the heroic, romantic Virginian who had an amazing talent for befuddling the Federal high command, disrupting supply and communication lines and compelling the Federals to detach large contingents to protect rear areas.

It is believed now that these partisans prolonged the

war, preventing a Northern victory in the summer of 1864.

On his jaunts through Northern Virginia, Mosby often crossed the Bull Run Ridge or retreated to safety there. He frequented the Ewell tract, passing by Dunblane, home of Dr. Jesse Ewell; Edge Hill; and Ewell's Chapel. (Dunblane and Edge Hill are both still standing, but in bad repair, pending settlement of the estate.)

Gen George G. Meade learned this and planned an ambush there for Mosby. He sent 40 mounted men and 100 infantry, who posted themselves at the chapel.

Mosby, with 30 men, appeared about sunrise. Mosby charged the cavalry, who ran toward the infantry, leading Mosby's band into the trap. But the infantry fired ineffectively from the ground and the

Rebels immediately

scattered and dispersed, escaping again to the mountain.

The evidence of the ambush is documented in the Official Records, War of the Rebellion, Vol. XXVII, Part III, p.255, in a letter to Gen. O. O. Howard from Gen. Meade, who said, "thus the prettiest chance in the world to dispose of Mr. Mosby was lost."

A Union soldier, a sergeant of the 17th Pennsylvania with a spyglass, had climbed a tree just over the gate leading to Edge Hill. He was shot from the tree and killed by Mosby. The splintered trunk of the cedar tree remains today, a victim of the elements.

The Union soldiers proceeded to Ewell's where they took Dr. Jesse prisoner. The dead soldier was left and buried by some neighbors.

It is logical to assume he was buried at the chapel, but his grave has not been



EWELL'S GRACE CHAPEL IN PAST

located. Then, many buried where they fought were later moved.

A family named Owens, evicted from their home, lived in the chapel during the war. There a son, Charles, was born to them.

A small boy, Calvin

Coolidge Teale, is buried in the churchyard. He was the son of a tenant farmer.

At least five couples were married in the chapel.

Gen. Richard Stoddert Ewell, cousin to Dr. Jesse, was brought to Dunblane after his leg had been

amputated following a battle at Gainesville. While there, his bodyguard of cavalry were quartered in the grove at the chapel.

After the war, the Chapel was restored and used until it again fell into decline with the advent of the automobile.

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