

Grace Chapel



Prince William County
Virginia

As time passes many land-marks 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 be remembered only as a former place of worship.

It is the purpose of this brief article to preserve, if possible, some of the past history of this modest House of God.

Grace Chapel is located at the entrance of "Edge Hill", home of the Ewell family for many generations, on the Carolina Road and just off the present State Route 15. The building is of frame construction and is, at the present time, in a good state of preservation.

The lot on which the Chapel stands was donated by Squire Jesse Ewell, Jr., and his wife Ellen M. Ewell, and was conveyed to Alfred Ball, Alexander Compton, John Lewis, Benjamin T. Chinn and William H. Dogan, Trustees, upon the following trust:

"That they shall cause to be built thereon a house 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 such only as may be especially prohibited by the aforesaid trustees or a majority of them."

The deed provided for the perpetuation of trustees in the following language:

"When any one or more of the said trustees shall die or remove from said county it shall be the duty of the minister who, for the time being is authorized by the said Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to have the personal charge of the same, to call a meeting of the remaining trustees, who shall appoint, with the concurrence of the said minister, one or more persons to fill

the place or places of him or them whose office has been vacated, so as to keep the number of five trustees forever."

The conveyance from which the foregoing excerpts are taken bears date of August 10th, 1847, and is recorded in Prince William County Clerk's Office in Liber No. 19, Folios 415-416. The deed was acknowledged by Jesse Ewell, Jr., and Ellen M. Ewell before James D. Tennelle and George G. Tyler, Justices of the Peace. Mrs. Ewell acknowledged the deed separately and apart from her husband, as was the law in those days.

No record can be found of the ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, who held services in Rescol Chapel; nor is the exact date of its acquisition by the Episcopal denomination known. The Rev. John Ambler was Rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Haymarket, from 1875 to 1881, and it was probably during his Rectorship, or that of his successor, the Rev. Arthur P. Gray, that the Chapel was purchased from the Methodist Church and the name changed from "Rescol" to "Grace" Chapel.

It was during this same period that a cross was erected on top of the building and the gallery, which had originally been provided for occupancy by members of the Negro race, was removed.

Through the years the Chapel lot and building have never been encumbered with debt.

The descendants of Jesse Ewell, Jr., were of the Episcopal faith, and this, coupled with the fact that the land on which the Chapel was erected came from the original Ewell estate, led them to take an active interest in its affairs. It has been largely through their efforts that the premises have been preserved in their present good condition. In addition to their interest in the preservation of the property, they have contributed valuable furnishings to Grace Chapel.

The altar cross, candlesticks and vases were given to the Chapel by Miss May Ewell in memory of the departed members of the family. She later pre-

sented the Chapel a lovely paten in memory of her sister, Mildred, who predeceased her.

The chairs and altar were given by Miss Eleanor Ewell, daughter of Dr. Jesse Ewell.

The pews were a gift from Mrs. Louise Keith, whose first husband, the Rev. Childs, was the first Rector of St. Albans, Washington, D. C.

The original Chapel lot was added to by the purchase of a small parcel of land from Charles Vermillion and the entire area was fenced by John Ewell, Jr.

The organ was purchased by the Episcopal congregation, and Mrs. Margaret Wilson, wife of Edward Wilson, possibly was the first organist. Miss Mildred Ewell was the last.

Miss Alice Maude Ewell, who wrote an interesting history of St. Paul's, Haymarket, was a faithful worker in keeping interest in the Chapel alive.

Of this large, Christian family, children of the late John S. Ewell, but two survive, Miss Charlotte Ewell and Miss Jennie Ewell. It can truly be said of both the living and the dead, "*Well done thou good and faithful servants.*"

Edward Wilson, Thomas O. Taylor, Tarleton Thomas and William Parker Wilson served the Chapel as vestrymen. Undoubtedly there were many more but no record of their names can be found.

There is no complete record of the ministers who have served Grace Chapel, but it is certain that the Rectors of St. Paul's have officiated there.

Rev. John Ambler	1875-1881
Rev. Arthur P. Gray	1881-1888
Rev. Thornton Byrd Turner	1889-1892
Rev. Maurice Eagle	1913-1915
Rev. Robert White	1915-1916
Rev. Thomas M. Browne	1919-1922
Rev. J. A. H. Bomberger	1923-1924
Rev. W. A. Seeger	1926-1928
Rev. W. F. Carpenter	1928-1950

The present Rector of St. Paul's and Grace Chapel is the Rev. George Stokes.

The following named couples were married in the Chapel:

Miss Isabella Tyler to Mr. Robert Moore

Miss Frances Edmonia Ewell to Mr. Edward Wilson, Jr.

Miss Jean Gardner to Mr. Francis Christopher Wilson.

Also one colored couple; Phoebe Magruder to Charles Murray. Phoebe was the daughter of "Uncle" Washington and "Aunt" Mary Magruder.

Grace Chapel has served as a temporary home for at least one family. Near the end of the War between the States a family by the name of Owens were evicted from their home and, having no other place to go, sought shelter in the building. While living there a son, Charles, was born to Mr. and Mrs. Owens.

The Chapel has also witnessed tragedy. On one of Mosby's raids a sniper fired from a tree killing a soldier whose body was buried near-by. During this skirmish Capt. Ballard, of Mosby's command, was wounded, the injury necessitating the amputation of one leg. Capt. Ballard survived the wound, however, and lived for many years, a resident of Fairfax County.

Of the persons mentioned in this booklet there are but seven known to be living: Miss Charlotte Ewell, Miss Jennie Ewell, Rev. W. F. Carpenter, Rev. Thomas M. Browne, Rev. George Stokes and Mr. and Mrs. Francis C. Wilson.

The writer realizes that there must have been many other persons intimately connected with Grace Chapel. However, as no records exist, their names are not known.

Acknowledgement is made to Miss Charlotte Ewell and to Mrs. Selina Taylor Wilson for their help in assembling of such facts as could be had.

EDMONIA TAYLOR SINCLAIR

*Charlotte Ewell d. 1959
Selena Taylor Wilson d. 26 Apr 1961
Edmonia Taylor Sinclair d. 8 Jul 1964*

*Newspaper article in 1973 says
booklet is more than 20 years old.
Booklet probably written 1950-53.*

RELIC

From: Ellie Ivancic [eivancic@townofhaymarket.org]
Sent: Wednesday, October 03, 2007 12:04 PM
To: RELIC
Subject: RE: Alice Maude Ewell exhibit flyer

Attachments: Grace Chapel booklet.pdf



Grace Chapel
booklet.pdf (205 ...

Bev,

Thanks for posting the flyer.

I found this little booklet on Grace Chapel in papers from my grandmother's house. Thought you might like to have it for your historic building file.

Ellie
Haymarket Museum
15025 Washington St.
Haymarket, VA 20169
703.753.3712

Quoting RELIC <relic2@pwcgov.org>:

> Thanks, Ellie. I've posted it.

> Bev

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Ellie Ivancic [mailto:eivancic@townofhaymarket.org]

> Sent: Saturday, September 29, 2007 3:01 PM

> To: RELIC

> Subject: Alice Maude Ewell exhibit flyer

> Tish and/or Beverly,
> Would you mind posting this flyer on your bulletin board?

> Thanks,

> Ellie

> Haymarket Museum

> 15025 Washington St.

> Haymarket, VA 20169

> 703.753.3712

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