

*To Pioneer
America*

Ewell's Chapel, Vanishing History

By Tommye S. Burton

A historic, deteriorating Chapel over 120 years old, faces demolition if some means of preserving it does not appear soon.

If Ewell's Grace Chapel, near Haymarket in Prince William County, Va., goes to the highest bidder, another chapter of that county's vanishing history goes with it, into oblivion.

At a time when the county is experiencing many problems attributed to its extremely rapid growth, its historical landmarks are disappearing.

The pre-civil war Chapel belongs to St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The congregation is in the predicament of being liable for the hazardous condition of the Chapel, but of having no funds with which to restore it.

A Grace Chapel Restoration Fund has been established and a committee formed of church members and non-church members. An appeal is being made to the public for support in rescuing a shred of Virginia's heritage.

The earliest deed for the Chapel property known to exist is recorded in Prince William County Courthouse, Liber # 19, Folio 415-416, dated August 10, 1847, and signed by Jesse Ewell and his wife Ellen M.

2839A9N07808 YMM01
MMS BOX 501 FROM
FOLDER HAYMARKET
(more)

1 add: Ewells Chapel

The property was deeded to five trustees to build a Chapel to be named "Rescol" for the use of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, --- "and when not in use by the ministers of said church - shall be free for the use of any other Christian sect or church."

The Chapel was acquired in 1884 by the Episcopal denomination from Sudley Methodist Church. It then became known as Grace Chapel.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

The structure is the original. It was re-weatherboarded in the early 1900s. The paneling of the interior walls and ceiling are hand-planed boards.

The historical significance of Ewell's Chapel is its role in the Civil War and the stark simplicity of a structure erected by a family descended of Virginia gentry, but of moderate means, during a time when travel to a church, even a short distance away was a trying ordeal..

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 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".

During the Civil War, the Chapel became a semi-ruin.

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.

Mosby was the heroic, romantic Virginian and had amazing talent for befuddling the Federal high command, disrupting supply and communication lines.

(more)

2 add: Ewell's Chapel

On his jaunts through Northern Virginia, Mosby often crossed the Bull Run ridge or retreated to safety there. He frequented the Ewell tract, passing Edge Hill and Dunblane; Ewell family homes, and Ewell Chapel (Dunblane and Edge Hill are still standing also, but in bad repair, pending settlement of 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 and led 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 mountains.

The evidence of the ambush is documented in the Official Records, 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 Ewell 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 found.

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.

(more)

The Ewells are buried in ~~xxx~~ the family cemetery at Edge Hill.

Gen. Richard Stoddert Ewell, cousin to Dr. Jesse Ewell, was brought to Dunblane after his leg had been amputated following the Battle of Gainesville. While there, his body guard 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.

Donations for the ~~x~~ restoration of the Chapel may be sent to Grace Chapel Restoration Fund, Mrs. John Marsh, Treasurer, 6305 Catharpin Rd., Gainesville, Va., 22065. Donations are tax deductible.

TOMMY BURTON PAPERS
MMS BOX 201 FROM
FOLDER HAYMARKET