



## Greenwich Presbyterian Church

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### TOMBSTONE TALES

Mrs. Aminta Elizabeth Moxley lamented that she was the only Presbyterian in her Prince William neighborhood.<sup>1</sup> Instead of just complaining, she began to invite people to her parlor for prayer and to hear visiting preachers. Mrs. Moxley persuaded her husband to build a log cabin for an assembly on their farm. The resulting building stood on a corner of the present Greenwich Church property. A cemetery was laid off nearby and over a period of years a number of persons have been buried beneath its markers. Some of these are now anonymous since the markers cannot be read. At least one had only a wooden slab with writing long worn off. Many are of interest only to surviving relatives. A few have at least touched history in some sort of way since the congregation began in 1810.

#### Charles Green 1807-1831

Charles Green was born in Shropshire, England. He came to America and became a prosperous merchant in Savannah, Georgia. Here he was active in the events of the city and attended the Independent Presbyterian Church. Green had a sister in the Greenwich community which he visited. He also established a sheepfarm near the church. Some relate the name Greenwich to Greenwich, England. Others insist that it is related to the Green family. "Wick" or "Wych" is a suffix meaning "a salt lick," and some believe that Mr. Green's farm adjacent to the church property had such a valuable asset. Nearby settlers referred to this spot near the Old Carolina Road as the one near the "Green-wick."

Green eventually met and took as his second wife Mrs. Moxley's grand-daughter, Lucy Irland Green (1828 - 1867). He became very much interested in the local church and soon proved to be its foremost patron. The Greens purchased the present-day church site which bordered on the old location. They donated and solicited money for the construction of the brick building which was completed in 1858. Mrs. Moxley survived to see her dream realized but died the same year at the age of 83.

Green and the congregation chose to build the church building in the only Rusticated Gothic Revival style of architecture in the county.<sup>2</sup> They also caused several stiles of English fashion to be built in the fence-line for alighting with ease from carriages, whatever the weather. The interesting looking gazebo-like structures and the hooded entrances for the sanctuary of similar fashion are still in place. The church yard and cemetery had to be fenced in order to keep out nearby cattle and other domestic animals. Some of these may have been Green's sheep. The building and cemetery are now registered as a Prince William County, Virginia State, and National Historic Landmark.

At the time of the Civil War, Union soldier, John C. Gray, Jr. wrote a letter to his mother, August 2, 1863. He said he was impressed with Green's house and property which was located across from the church on the corner of what is now Vint Hill (215) and Burwell (604) Roads. He said that the Head Quarters, 1st Division, 11th Corps was camped on the lawn of the Englishman. Green had posted on his gate, "British Property under Safeguard, by order of General Meade." He provided meals and lodging for the general, which may have aroused some consternation with local, loyal Southerners.

Gray told his mother that he was surprised to find such a clean house in Virginia! The original house burned in 1924, but some of the outbuildings remain. Part of the original kitchen was incorporated into a new dwelling by a son-in-law of Green. He replaced the original Carpenter Gothic Style with a Tudor Revival Style.<sup>3</sup>

The Union soldier in one of his letters seemed to be somewhat taken back that Green appeared at the shooting of a deserter which was scheduled on his property. He "put on his gloves, spread his umbrella and walked down to see the execution with a little dog trotting before him and his little boys behind him to be improved by the spectacle, as he would have taken them to a hanging in the old country."<sup>4</sup>

Gray later ran into Green again, this time in Savannah in 1864.<sup>5</sup> Green was one of the prominent citizens who had gone out to meet General Sherman when at the end of his famous March to the Sea he took over the city. When Gray went to Savannah he found Sherman had his headquarters in Green's Savannah residence. It is now the parish house of St. John's Episcopal Church on Madison Square. It also is in the National Register of Historic Places.

During the War soldiers from both sides built camp fires on the Greenwich church yard and in nearby woods. A number of White Oaks, a few over 200 years old, still stand around the church. What tales these trees overheard. Federals with their usual disrespect for sanctuaries threatened to take over the brick building as a hospital, or possibly as a stable, as in some places, at the time of the two battles of Manassas. They were put off by the threats of Green who had stipulated that if the property was used for any other purpose it would revert to the donor. He told them this "would make it English property as I am an Englishman."<sup>6</sup> Federals didn't want to antagonize the British when they were courting England to stay neutral so left the building alone. They used the former sanctuary, the second house of logs, which still stood at that time.

Green travelled freely during the war period. While he didn't mind entertaining Union generals he "hotly espouses" the Rebel cause and carried messages of military significance. The Yankees suspected him to be a spy and cast him into prison at Fort Warren for six months on trumped up charges. He seemed to have made the most of this experience. He was much beloved by the ladies of the post who presented him with six damask napkins with "Charles Green, Fort Warren" embroidered in red cotton across one corner.<sup>7</sup>

In between Union Generals, Green also entertained Confederate Colonel John S. Mosby and his men. These Raiders continually harassed the enemy in this area by capturing supplies and fighting skirmishes. One afternoon Edward, Green's son, crept unnoticed into the parlor to watch Mosby lay "his plumed felt on the piano and is trilling and banging away at the instrument as he roars a thunderous song." Edward crawled behind the hero and fingered his braided coat and examined a coat tail and murmured "Poor fella, poor fella."<sup>8</sup> The breeches were torn and full of patches. Mosby, managed to keep poverty out of sight by sitting on it, said Anne Green. Anne, Edward's daughter also noted that a photograph of Edward from this time showed him to be afflicted with the same problem. Times were tough.

Mosby's outfit fought a skirmish on the Carolina Road near Greenwich after they attacked the railway near Catlett. They held off the Federals awhile with a small howitzer. Giving out of ammunition and suffering several casualties they withdrew. Green, hearing the firing and knowing of the skirmish, took his ox cart and picked up two of the wounded Raiders. One was also an Englishman, Captain Bradford Smith Hoskins. Hoskins had been in the Crimean War before getting involved in the War Between the States. Green took the wounded men to his home and nursed them, but Hoskins died. Green informed Hoskins' father, an Anglican clergyman, who sent money for a tombstone (1833-1863) for the young soldier of fortune in Greenwich Cemetery on the west side.

After the War Green spent much time away from Greenwich. He is buried close to the sanctuary on the east side, between the church and his beloved residence, The Lawn.

FOOTNOTES AND OTHER MATERIAL WILL APPEAR LATER.

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