

Greenwood church survives as reminder of past amid growth

By GREGORY TRIPLETT
for the Potomac News

As construction expands Cardinal Drive and Minnieville Road into four-lane divided roadways, a 19th century church survives, squeezed in at their intersection.

Places

Greenwood Primitive Baptist Church, a small brick building with a tin roof, was organized in 1884 according to the message inscribed on a gray stone in the wall near the front door.

Tall maple trees shade the churchyard, their red, yellow, and orange leaves scattered over the green grass. Artificial flowers lay on and against gravestones in small cemeteries at the front and rear of the church.

Greenwood's first congregation consisted of people who had attended Chopawamsic Church in Stafford County. The land was a gift from the Danes of Pilgrim's Rest, near Nokesville, according to the book "Prince William - The Story of Its People and Its Places."

"During the 19th century, varieties of Baptists broke away and formed different doctrines," said Donald Wilson, Virginiana librarian for Prince William County.

An historical marker alongside Minnieville Road explains that the Minnieville post office was also located on this corner from 1884 to 1924.

"The place was officially named

Minnieville. Greenwood was probably the local congregation's name for the area," Wilson said.

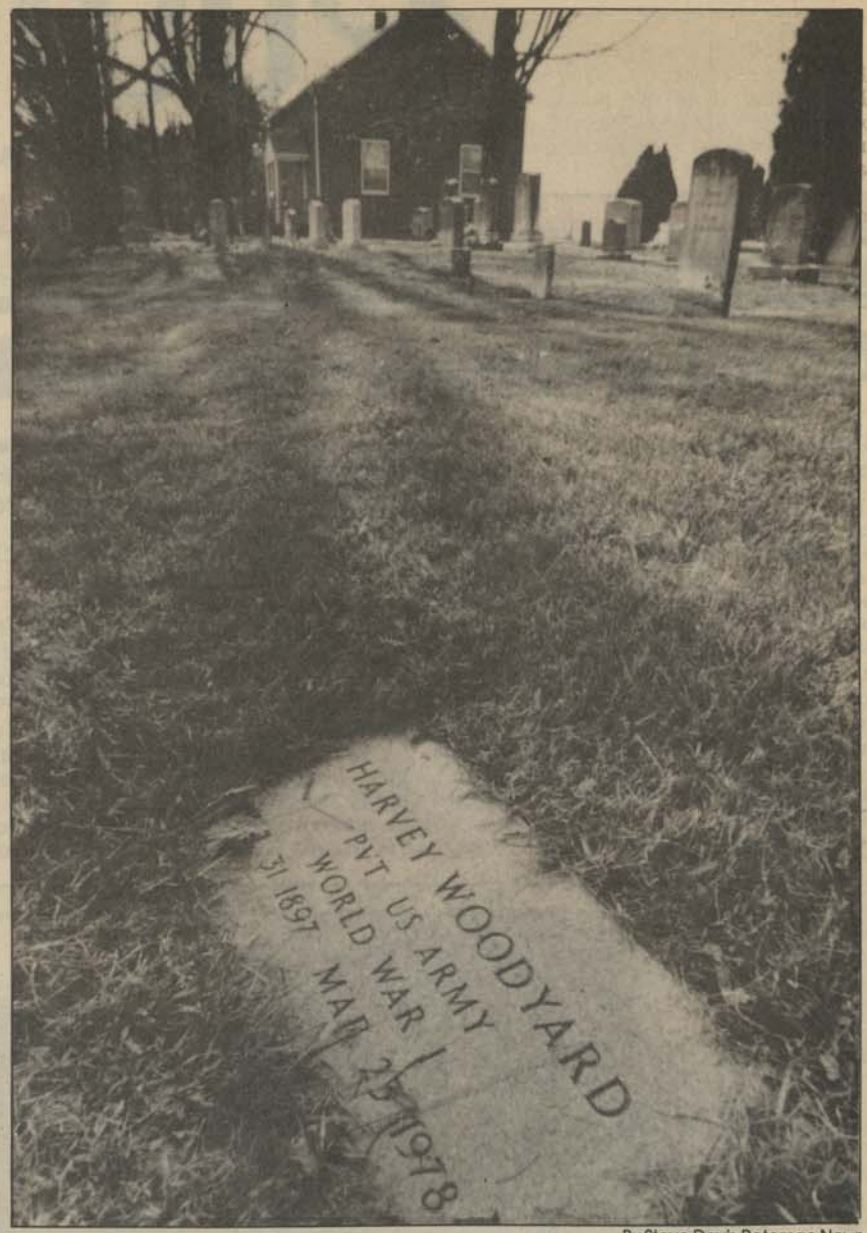
No sign on the church or its property shows a schedule, minister, or telephone number to indicate that the church is presently used by a congregation.

"Primitive Baptists are a group of Baptists which developed in the 1830's," said W.T. Smith, Jr., Director of Missions for the Potomac Baptist Association in Manassas. "They meet one Sunday a month for a worship service only — no revivals, no missionary work. Primitive Baptists are also known as Old School Baptists. There were once many small country churches, but few are still active now."

A chain link fence, bent and broken in several places, borders the churchyard along Cardinal Drive and Minnieville Road. A wire fence with wooden posts separates Greenwood and its downhill neighbor on Minnieville, First United Presbyterian Church of Dale City.

A Virginia Department of Transportation sign on Cardinal Drive reads: Virginia's 21st Century Transportation Program — Site of Future Improvements, and a white signboard attached to Greenwood's chain link fence bears this message in faded black painted letters: Greenwood Primitive Baptist Church - organized in 1884.

A stroll around this serene churchyard provides a brief respite from nearby traffic as Prince William's present day construction bumps and jostles its past.



By Steve Davis-Potomac News
Greenwood Primitive Baptist Church, organized in 1884, is at the intersection of Cardinal Drive and Minnieville Road.