

# *Greene County*

MAGAZINE

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**Grace Episcopal Church, Stanardsville**



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## GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH, STANARDSVILLE

Julie Dickey

Grace Episcopal Church in Stanardsville was not built until 1901, however the history of the Episcopal Church in Greene County goes back to the colonial period. Because Greene County was originally a part of Orange County, it was also a part of St. Thomas Parish. The parish church was St. Thomas Church in the town of Orange. During the Revolutionary War the colonial-established Church of Virginia was separated from the Commonwealth of Virginia, and in 1785 the Diocese of Virginia was formed to govern the churches through its bishop.

Greene County was separated from Orange County in 1838, but Grace Episcopal Church remained in St. Thomas Parish until 1923. At that time the Council of the Diocese of Virginia designated the area of Greene as Neve Parish. In 1933 Neve Parish was divided by the Diocesan Council and Grace Church became a part of the newly-formed Gibson Parish. In 1967 the Council of the Diocese united Neve and Gibson parishes to form the present Gibson-with-Neve Parish, which includes Grace Church and the Gibson Memorial Chapel at Blue Ridge School.

The Rev. Dr. George J. Cleaveland, who was registrar and historiographer of the Diocese of Virginia from 1964 until 1979, compiled a short history of Grace Church which is recorded in the Book of Remembrance at the Church. Dr. Cleaveland spent much of his childhood in Stanardsville while his father, the Rev. W. M. Cleaveland, served at Grace Church (1907-1913).



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According to Dr. Cleaveland, Greene was the only county in the Diocese of Virginia where there was no Episcopal Church. Beginning in 1894 Episcopal services were held once a month in Stanardsville by the Rev. E. W. Cowling and others from the Albemarle Convocation. Dr. Cleaveland says that the Rev. R. C. Cowling served in Greene County from about 1896 to 1901. Grace Church was built under the leadership of Rev. R. C. Cowling and at the insistence of the Rt. Rev. Francis McN. Whittle.

The land for Grace Church was purchased for \$300.00 from Albert and Bertie Yancy on November 17, 1898. The trustees were Oscar Fitzhugh, James Beasley, and R. C. Cowling.<sup>1</sup> Miss Sallie E. Beasley was the church treasurer. The church, built in the Gothic Revival style, cost \$1,500.00 to construct. It originally had a wood shingled roof and shutters.

Grace Church was consecrated by the Rt. Rev. Robert A. Gibson, D.D., on July 30, 1901. According to Dr. Cleaveland, Bishop Gibson said about an earlier visit to the county in his address to the Diocesan Council: "On Sunday, July the 10th, 1898, I held two services at the County Seat, Stanardsville; these services were most interesting. They were both attended by large intelligent congregations, and the evening was signetized by the first confirmation ever held in the county. Two persons were confirmed."

In 1904 the Archdeaconery of the Blue Ridge was created by the Diocese of Virginia, and the Rev. Frederick W. Neve was appointed archdeacon in charge of mission work in seven mountainous counties of Central Virginia. Stanardsville was the headquarters for the work in Greene County. The ministers at Grace Church shared the responsibilities for the mountain missions with many other clergy and laymen. The missions flourished for fifty years but were finally

closed as social conditions changed.

The Rev. Robb ("Bobb") White and the Rev. W. M. Cleaveland were the two main builders in the missionary area. In a letter from the Rev. Dennis Whittle he wrote of Bobb White: "He was a great force for good . . . [He was] very clever with horses; [he] helped put down the lawless element. [He] developed work in Upper Pocosan and Lydia, and pioneered in Mutton Hollow, having services in the open . . . and left however in 1906, and went to the Phillipines. The Rev. Dennis Whittle further states the Rev. W. M. Cleaveland "did much good work especially at Lydia and Stanardsville."<sup>2</sup>

A rectory was purchased in 1908 by the Blue Ridge Mission of the Episcopal Church. The property in Stanardsville consisted of a residence on 14 1/2 acres. It was bought from Edgar and Ida Marshall for \$3,500.00.<sup>3</sup> This property was subdivided in 1966 and a new rectory was built on one lot. The first rectory was thereupon sold. The second rectory was sold in 1981, with Grace Church retaining two building lots.

The Episcopal Parish Hall was built in 1934 and in 1964 a wing connecting it to the church was added. Through his contacts with Marye Moyers McMullen, S. Judson Dunaway gave a donation toward the construction of the rectory and Sunday School rooms in memory of his parents, Frances Lourenna Moyers Dunaway and Raleigh Dunaway.

Through the years Grace Church has received many gifts. These are recorded in a Book of Remembrance at the Church. Two of the earliest gifts to the church were the stained glass window over the altar given by Mrs. William Byrd Page and the baptismal font which is inscribed, "In memory of Rufus K. Fitzhugh, 1816 - 1888." Mrs. Ruth Morris donated a collection of photographs of priests who have



served at Grace Church. This series hangs in the Vestry room.

Built as a church on the road to the mountain missions, Grace Church stands today, eighty-one years after its consecration, as a self-supporting church. Although its position in the work of the Diocese has changed, the physical appearance of the church has remained the same. It is served part-time by its rector, the Rev. John Kettlewell, who also serves Gibson Memorial Chapel at Blue Ridge School.

Clergy at Grace Church<sup>4</sup>

E. W. Cowling Summers 1894 - 1897	W. Leigh Ribble 1930 - 1935
R. C. Cowling 1897 - 1901	Robert S. Boshier 1936 - 1940
Robb White 1902 - 1906	A. Campbell Tucker 1941 - 1947
Willis Milton Cleaveland 1907 - 1913	Frederick A. Sapp 1947 - 1953
Byrd Thornton Turner 1914 - 1918	Albert N. Jones 1953 - 1956
J. Malcolm Taylor 1918 - 1925	R. Douglas Pitt 1956 - 1968
W. B. Gaither 1926	John Kettlewell 1968 -
David H. Lewis 1926 - 1930	

<sup>1</sup>Deed Book 11, Greene County, Virginia, page 169.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from Rev. Dennis Whittle to Mrs. Ruth Morris quoted in Book of Remembrance, Grace Church, page 6.

<sup>3</sup>Deed Book 15, Greene County, Virginia, page 205.

<sup>4</sup>List compiled by Mrs. Laura C. Moyers, Book of Remembrance, Grace Church, page 7.