
Greene County Magazine

A History of Westover United Methodist Church of Ruckersville, VA



Greene County Historical Society

Volume 17, 2002/2003

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***A HISTORY OF WESTOVER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Of Ruckersville, VA
By: Rev. Lindsay V. Walton, Sr.***



Photo by Cynthia Clatterbuck

Westover United Methodist Church is situated in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. In fact, the church itself sits atop one of those hills not far from the Rapidan River. As with most churches, Westover grew from the vision of a few souls who felt the call to form a faith community in their area.

In 1907, a group of 15 to 20 persons began holding prayer meetings and occasional services in a private school building located on a farm owned by N.B. Early, Jr. In September of 1909, 17 persons took vows of membership and formed a new congregation under the pastorship of the Rev. J .K. Holman, pastor of the Greene Circuit. The Church register lists them as:

N.B. Early, Jr.
Sudie Early
George A. Haney
Bazile Haney
Sarah L. Haney
Haseltine Haney

William Arthur Miller
William J. Miller
Kate L. Miller
Lena Kyle Miller
L. Pearle Kirtley
Janie E. Kirtley

St. Clair D. Kirtley
Mary K. Kirtley
Thomas S. Kirtley
Myrtle Landes
Hannah Locker

A short time thereafter, the congregation began looking for a site for a new church building. Many sites were examined but the site chosen was a two-acre lot from Westover Farm, owned by N.B. Early, Jr. The deed was recorded in Greene County on October 23, 1909 (Greene County Deed Book 15, page 429). The church adopted the 'Westover' name and the church trustees, S.D. Kirtley, William J. Miller, George Haney, Bazile Haney, A.J. Stephens, and N.B. Early, Jr., entered into a contract with James E. Harlow to construct Westover Church on July 20, 1910.

The contract stated that the church would be constructed for the sum of \$1200. The Virginia Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South would contribute a portion of those funds (\$250). Another portion of money was raised by the sale of squirrel stew on the church lot.

The exterior of the church was constructed according to the "Brown's Cove Plan" and the interior follows the "Daemon Plan." The church is constructed of "Heart of Pine" and exterior weatherboard is of "Yellow Poplar." William J. Miller and N.B. Early, Jr. supplied both the lumber and foundation stone. The wood was brought to the church lot and dried in a kiln. The kiln remained standing for many years after construction was completed.

Upon completion of construction in 1913, a dedication service was held with Dr. Waterfield serving as Presiding Elder (a position now known as District Superintendent). A sermon was delivered, and a picnic lunch served on grounds completed the dedication service. At this time Westover was removed from the Greene Circuit and placed on the Rapidan Circuit.

The church organ was purchased through a foundation set up by the Carnegie Corporation, which provided funds for Churches to purchase these instruments for their place of worship¹. The order was placed and after a long period of silence a telegram was received stating a large box was waiting at the Gordonsville Train Depot. A team of horses and a wagon traveled to Gordonsville to find the church organ had finally arrived.

The church cemetery was begun on the grounds in 1917 with the burial of Arthur Miller. Two confederate veterans, Bazil Haney and William Buckner are also buried in Westover Cemetery.

Many people throughout the area flocked to this new church. Several current members remember times when so many people were in attendance that the children had to sit on the floor in front of the alter rail. Some of those families who attended the church in earlier days were: May, Snow, Watson, Haney, Collins, Dulaney, Herndon, Early, Kirtley, Berry, Miller, Buckner, Slaughter, Parrott, Eddins, Cason, White, Powell, Breeden, Deane, Jarrell, Kennedy, Burton and Turner. During World War n, Westover fell on hard times. Many people were so involved in the war effort that only a few people continued to attend. After the war however, the church rallied.

In 1987, Westover was removed from the Rapidan Circuit and placed as a station charge. The current pastor, Rev. Lindsay V. Walton, Sr., came to Westover in August 1989. From 1994 to 1996, a major renovation project was undertaken, under the direction of Elmo Haney, which included the restoration of the windows, new wiring, additional heating ducts, new roofing, plasterwork, and interior and exterior painting. In 1995, Westover began sharing Rev. Walton with Bingham's UMC. A picnic shelter was constructed in 1997 in memory of Elton McDaniel. In 1998 Westover was included in the Blue Ridge Cooperative Parish that included four other churches: Brown's Cove, Gentry, Bingham's and Mountain View.

The previous history is largely the oral history of the congregation. The overall structure is an excerpt from the family history of Pearl Brown compiled by Lena Kyle Miller. It would be difficult to list the stories that I have been told concerning this church, but these are the stories that create our present. A church set upon a hill is hard to hide. It is our hope that these stories reflect our love for Christ and our commitment to his Father.

ENDNOTES

¹ A search was made by the archivist at Columbia University in the Carnegie Corporate records for Vol. 10, Grants for Church Organs and the Pamphlet, Gore, James H., A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York Nov. 18, 1915. However, no specific citation could be found.

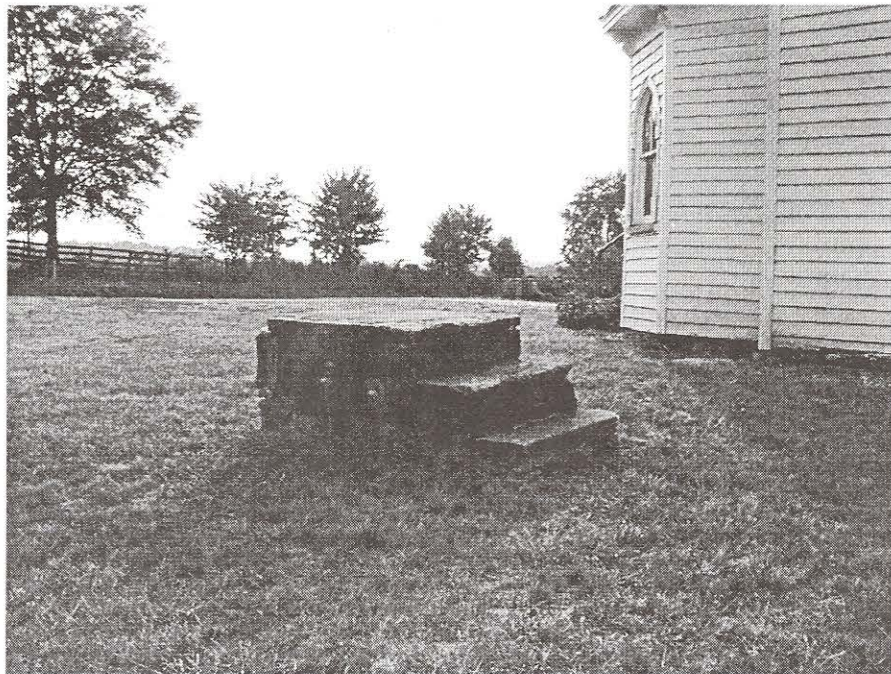


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