



Fort Blackmore Camp History

Early Beginnings (Early 20th Century)

In Fort Blackmore Virginia next to Stoney Creek at the foothills of Stone Mountain was the Cumberland Mountain Mission. The mission was an organization for doing religious and charitable work among the needy in the community. It was non-denominational. Regardless of your religion, if you were in need, they helped.

Clemons Winegar and his wife gave land to the Missionaries to come to Stoney Creek. The deed dated back to 1921. W. P. Brickey sold one-half acre of land for one dollar to the trustee of the Cumberland Mountain Mission but had to be used for religious and educational purposes only. Robert Fields sold 1.29 acres of land to Margaret J. Joff and Frances M. Insinger, trustees of the Cumberland Mountain Mission for \$300 in 1945.

At this time there were log cabins and a main house built. The cabins were named for people who made contributions to the mission. Peter Brickey, George Starnes and Sylvester Lane did most of the construction. The Chapel on the mission was located near a spring area. It was a gathering place before Sunday School which was held at 2:00 p.m. each Sunday. They would sing "What a Friend We Have In Jesus", "Trust and Obey," "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning," and "The Old Rugged Cross." Part of Sunday school service was Bible Verse recitation and Bible drills. They would call out a verse and the first to find it would stand up and read it. Two of the fastest verse readers were Peggy Gillenwater and Tempy Brickey.

Mrs. Hoff, the superintendent of the mission, organized a conference to which people came from all over the Eastern United States. People would stay in the conference building located at the south end of the property and was a large two-story building. Billy Sunday and Homer Rodeheaver were two well-known people who visited the mission. Billy Sunday was an ex-baseball player who became an Evangelist. Homer Rodeheaver was a musician and singer who traveled with Billy Sunday. Rodeheaver is best known as the author of the hymn, "Precious Lord".

Every Christmas, there were plays and Santa Claus always gave out treats and gifts for everyone.

The Missionaries had a schoolhouse built on the mission grounds which was used by grades one through six. Teachers were Miss Barnes from Iowa, Miss Insinger from Pennsylvania, Miss Taylor from New York. Lunch was always served free to students and was served by two Rhodes sisters who were paid five cents per hour. On Friday nights they would hold youth socials at the schoolhouse. They would sing and play group games.

Kate Brickey worked at the mission. She would get in the wood and coal and do odd jobs. She was paid five cents per hour. She was also able to get food and clothing for her family.

The ones who worked the longest at the mission were, Mrs. Margaret Hoff, Alice Barnes, Lydia Acker and Frances Insinger. These ladies were able to get a scholarship for several women from the area to be able to attend college. Mrs. Hoff was the force that kept the mission going. She was born in Ashland, Virginia in 1880. She was the widow of Episcopalian Minister. She was a tireless worker also in other community projects. She worked for better roads, bridges, housing, education, and health care. She was a practical Nurse. Southwest Virginia area doctors gave her samples which were sent to them from Richmond. She would run a clinic to treat patients. She often rode a mule miles into the mountain to treat sick people. In 1917-1918 there was a Flu outbreak in the Stoney Creek community. Dr McConnell the area doctor met up with Mrs. Hoff. He wanted her to help treat sick patients with the Flu and said could do as much good treating as he could. He told her to give them some moonshine. But she did not have any. The next morning she opened her front door and there was a gallon of moonshine. She would make it into a toddy of two spoonful of moonshine and one spoonful of water sweetened with sugar or molasses. She would also arrange for many people to go to Sheltering Arm Hospital in Richmond for medical treatment. Their families were given a pass to ride the train to the hospital. Mrs. Hoff's influence was widespread. Being from Richmond, she knew people with money and influence. She would often receive donations of money, clothing, shoes, and food. It was all shipped by rail to Fort Blackmore and then hauled by wagon or truck to the mission.

As Mrs. Hoff got closer to old age and her health began to decline. She spent her winters in Hollywood Florida and died there in 1965. Before her death, Mrs. Hoff had negotiated a sale of the hereinafter described to the trustees for the Big Stone District, Holston Conference of the Methodist Church.

Growth and Expansion

The Camp offers a large dining hall and kitchen with restrooms. The dining hall is enclosed with heat and air conditioning. It can seat well over 100 people and has a commercial style kitchen with freezers, refrigerators, stoves, washer/dryer and ice machine. The building can be rented for church functions, parties, weddings, or family reunions. The camp also offers overnight stay in which campers have three bunk houses that consist of six bunk beds each. These bunk houses only have bunks and electricity. No restrooms are in the bunk houses. There is a large bath house near the bunk houses which have showers, and restroom facilities. The grounds can also be used for tent camping as well. We also have a large picnic shelter on the campgrounds for picnics and other uses. Campers can hike the "Tater Knob" if they want a good challenging climb or take a stroll over the banks of Stoney creek and enjoy nature and the cool creek air. There is plenty of room for kids to run and play. The camp can be rented year-around and we continue to make improvements to improve the Camp. The Swimming Pool is now redone and open for the summer season. This was always a huge part of the camp was the swimming pool.

A congregation that split from a local Baptist church, now named Stoney Creek Fellowship Church, worships in the main building every Sunday. Fort Blackmore Camp has hosted Easter egg hunts attracting as many as 250 participants and an annual "trout derby," made possible by stocking 400 pounds of fish in the creek that runs through the camp.

