

# HARMONY GROVE CHURCH AND SCHOOL

Written by Hubert G. Holland of Marietta; sent to Jeannette Holland Austin

There once stood a grove of trees in Land Lot 311, Third District, Third Section of Original Cobb County, Georgia. The East halves of the First, Second and Third Districts of the Third Section of Original Cherokee County were made a part of Cobb County in 1832 when Cobb County was created and remained therein until the area was annexed into Paulding County in 1852. Land Lot 311 was located in Cobb County until 1852 and was drawn in the Cherokee Gold Lottery of 1832 by John Hicks of Coweta County, Georgia. A wagon road was completed by 1835 from Peachtree Trail in Marietta northwesterly and meanderingly through Northwest Cobb County and it intersected with the Sally Hughes Road (now known as Georgia Highway 61) in Land Lot 304, Third District. The wagon road later became known as Burnt Hickory Road and derived its name from the Burnt Hickory Campsite where the huge hickory tree had burned and smoked for six weeks in 1840.

File 76-18, Georgia Department of Archives and History, shows that on December 24, 1840, a group of early settlers composed of baptists, methodists and presbyterians, realizing the great need for a school and church in the community, met and organized a school and church and decided to construct a wooden building therefor in the grove of trees in Land Lot 311. Since the nondenominational services proved to be rewarding and were conducted in HARMONY and the wooden building was located in the GROVE, they named both the church and school - HARMONY GROVE.

Also, File 76-18 shows that the Harmony Grove Church and Harmon Grove School were founded by John and Margaret McEver Baker, John Campbell, Joseph Carnes, Richard and Nancy Ruff Carnes, Noah Dudley, Thomas Goodwin, Richard and Sarah Watson Grogan, John Hicks, William Hooper, William and Ester Kennedy, Catherine Starnes, Daniel and Mary Miller Starnes, Noah and Martha Terry, John Thompson and R. Whitworth in 1840.

The 1840 Harmony Grove Church building in Land Lot 311 was destroyed by fire sometime prior to 1855. Construction of a second church building was delayed until after the end of the Civil War. The early settlers had established a cemetery in the grove beside the 1840 church building. This area is now known as the Old Harmony Grove Church Cemetery.

After the soldiers had returned home from the Civil War, the people of the Harmony Grove Community met and chose a site for the new church building in Land Lot 266 on the property of William Cochran. A new wooden building was constructed in 1866 on the site, it being located about 50 feet south of the present site of the 1910 church building.

They moved the school into the new building and both it and the church continued to operate under the name of Harmony Grove. William Cochran (1803-1872) by deed of gift dated 3-18-1871 conveyed title to the church site in Land Lot 266 to "Robert H. McMillan and William T. McEver as trustees of the Presbyterian Church, William Calvin Cochran and Richard Carnes as trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and John T. Graves and David D. Grogan as trustees of the Baptist Church, South, for so long as said several religious denominations and their successors shall maintain a church thereon." The church remained nondenominational until it became a part of the Van Wert Circuit of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1872. The church records are missing but according to a book written by Mrs. Sam P. Jones entitled: *THE LIFE AND SAYINGS OF SAM P. JONES*, pages 57 to 71, the Rev. Sam Jones (1847-1936) was appointed as a traveling preacher for the Van Wert Circuit on 11-27-1872, this being the year that the Harmony Grove Church became affiliated with the Van Wert Circuit. Rev. Sam P. Jones became a famous preacher very quickly and by August, 1873, people came from near and far away to listen to his sermons at the Harmony Grove Church. The 1866 church building would not seat the congregation. Rev. Jones and the members of the church decided to build a tabernacle.

The members of the church and Rev. Sam P. Jones constructed a large tabernacle on the present site of the brick mansion built by William Moon. The tabernacle would seat a large congregation. It was filled to capacity each time Rev. Jones preached there. According to the aforesaid book of Mrs. Sam P. Jones, Rev. Jones served as pastor until 1876 at which time he was succeeded by Dr. J.W. Lee. Mrs. Sam P. Jones (1850-1926) was very complimentary of the members of the churches of the Van Wert Circuit and the following data is contained in her book: "the Van Wert Circuit was made up of five churches which were located in parts of four counties, namely: Bartow, Floyd, Paulding and Polk. We rented a house at ten dollars per month in the town of Van Wert at the edge of Rockmart in Polk County and moved there from Cartersville in December, 1872. My husband received seven hundred dollars per year while in the Van Wert Circuit. This was not all in money, but a great deal of it was in corn, wheat, hay and fodder. Some of it was paid in meat, chickens, eggs and butter. We used a horse and buggy as transportation to and from the five churches. He preached almost constantly and delivered an average of four hundred sermons a year. The three years on the Van Wert Circuit

were gracious years, in that we saw wonderful revivals and great increases in church membership (more than 600). The devotion of the people to their pastor was remarkable and his great interest and love for them increased year by year. These were three years of work, happiness and blessings in our own lives. Some of the happiest days of my life were spent with these people of the Van Wert Circuit, and the memory of them will ever be sweet."

Religious services and the school were conducted in the 1866 church building until 1910. A portion of the site in Land Lot 266 was used as a campground and camp meetings were held there for many years.

The members in 1910 chose a site for the new church building and such was located about 50 feet north of the 1866 church building in Land Lot 239 and on the

west side of Burnt Hickory Road N/K/A Harmony Grove Road. A new building was constructed on this site in 1910 and it stands there in excellent condition at the present time. Mr. R.W. Whitworth by deed dated 10-3-1910 conveyed title to the church site in Land Lot 239 to "J.E. Newbill, G.W. Grogan and W.H. Terry as trustees of the Harmony Grove Methodist Episcopal Church and their successors and assigns and this tract of land in Land Lot 239 of the Third District, Third Section of Paulding County shall be used, kept and maintained and disposed of a place of divine worship."

A new one-room building to house the Harmony Grove School was constructed in 1912 on the present site of the new mansion built by Terry Leard. The Harmony Grove School was discontinued in 1936. The Harmony Grove Methodist Church and Hopewell Methodist Church were merged to form the Burnt Hickory United Methodist

Church in 1972. The cemeteries, church grounds and buildings were sold to private persons by the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. Left behind without a perpetual care trust were some of the most important historical landmarks in Paulding County, Georgia.

The late Mrs. Florence Loudermilk Studley died in New Mexico in 1991. The head of her grave in the New Harmony Grove Church Cemetery was marked only by a flower pot. On November 15, 1995, the flower pot was replaced by an inscribed upright granite tombstone paid for by the Harmony Grove Church Memorial Fund, a public supported 501(c)(3) historical preservation trust. Since the date the trust was created in 1983, it and the Naomi & Hubert Trust Fund have purchased and erected 85 inscribed upright granite monuments as replacements of flower pots, field rocks and other objects used as tombstones, being 10 in the New Harmony Grove Church Cemetery and 75 in the Old Harmony Grove Church Cemetery.

The Harmony Grove Church Memorial Fund is designed to purchase and repair tombstones, make other physical improvements to the cemeteries and provide perpetual care for the two cemeteries, church grounds and buildings of the Harmony Grove Church. When donations to the Harmony Grove Church Memorial Fund increase the principal in an amount sufficient to provide adequate annual interest income, it will become able to pay the cost to erect inscribed tombstones on all graves in need of the same, make other physical improvements to the cemeteries and grounds and buildings and provide perpetual care for the cemeteries, grounds and buildings of the Harmony Grove Church.

Perhaps there are at least 100,000 living descendants of the some 550 beloved persons whose bodies are interred in the Old and New Harmony Grove Church cemeteries. The principal of the Harmony Grove Church Memorial Fund now totals less than \$9,500 of the needed \$100,000. Unfortunately, many of the thousands of living descendants have failed to make donations to this historical preservation trust. It is so easy to forget to provide perpetual care for the graves of our ancestors and other beloved persons. Those persons who later decide to contribute to it and participate in the preservation of their heritage should make their checks or money orders payable to the Harmony Grove Church Memorial Fund and mail them to the Trust Department, South Trust Bank, P.O. Box 1001, Atlanta, Georgia 30301-1001.

The body of Mrs. Comfort Cash Carnes (1753-1861), wife of Joseph Carnes who was an American Revolutionary Soldier, is interred in the Old Harmony Grove Church Cemetery. Between 1851 and 1898 there was no public high school in Paulding County. Several of the members of the Harmony Grove Church moved to Polk County so their children could complete high school in their county of residence. Several of them joined the Van Wert Methodist Church. The bodies of Peter Carnes, a descendant of Joseph and Comfort Cash Carnes, and his wife are interred in the Van Wert Cemetery in Polk County, Georgia. Mrs. Zan Henslee Gammage, wife of Attorney Lamar Gammage of Cedartown, is a descendant of Joseph and Comfort C. Carnes.

This article was written on January 15, 2000, by Atty. Hubert G. Holland, 7 Atlanta Street, Marietta, Georgia 30060, from data furnished by Diane Holland of the Cobb County Public Library, Georgia Department of Archives and History and the National Archives.

