

ELABORATE ABBEY TO IMMORTALIZE SOUTH'S LEADERS

Calvary Churchyard Now Internationally Known as "Westminster Abbey of The South."

By J. B. HICKLIN.

A memorial tablet honoring the memory of Jefferson Davis, first and only president of the Southern Confederacy, was dedicated in an elaborate ceremony at Old Calvary Episcopal church, at Fletcher, N. C., on Sunday, September 13, 1931. The dedicatory services drew large delegations of members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and others from all parts of the south. The exercises were under the auspices of the North Carolina Division, U. D. C.

The inscription on the marker unveiled reads as follows:

"JEFFERSON DAVIS
"President of the Confederate States of America, Soldier, Planter, Author, Statesman. Born June 3, 1808, Fairview, Kentucky. Died December 6, 1889, New Orleans, Louisiana. He was a statesman with clean hands and pure heart, who served his people faithfully and well from budding manhood to hoary age."

Three immortal additions were made to the distinguished company of southern artists last summer when markers were unveiled to Henry Timrod, "Laureate of the Confederacy;" Robert Loveman, eminent poet, and Orren Randolph Smith, designer of the "Stars and Bars."

Rev. Clarence Stuart McClellan is the originator and founder of the "Westminster Abbey of the South." Plans sponsored by Mr. McClellan call for the addition of monuments to southern leaders each year until the great concourse that played outstanding parts in the shaping and making of the section have all been recognized. This will include leadership and outstanding achievement, in all lines — poetry and literature and statesmanship, as well as other great figures produced by the south.

It is a great dream that Mr. McClellan has visioned, and it is already coming true. The public re-

sponded almost instantly to his suggestion of building a great "outdoor Westminster Abbey of the South" at Fletcher, in the most gloriously beautiful section of the land that is called Dixie: Every state will be called upon to memorialize the names of their most beloved sons and daughters. A great many of them have already done so.

Plans call for the conversion of the great church ground at Fletcher into a memorial garden—a thing of artistic beauty as well as of historic interest. The Abbey is already taking shape, although the development is still in a nebulous shape. But the picture of it as it will be is very clear in the mind of Mr. McClellan, and he delights to explain it to those who will take the time to stop and listen.

"The Westminster Abbey of the South will have fulfilled its noble purpose by placing before the eyes and minds and hearts of coming generations the great ideals of the South; its songs, its poetry, its books and prose and their writers, statesmen — every bit of history that is meaningful for the future," Mr. McClellan explains.

Sitting with him beneath a magnificent white pine, one of the hundreds that make the tract one of the beauty spots of the "Land of the Sky," one may catch a glimpse of this remarkable dream and, glancing down the vista of years, behold a shrine that will be visited annually by thousands from every corner of the globe.

Old Calvary church nestles in a tight little valley of the pine-clad hills of western North Carolina 10 miles east of Asheville on the Dixie highway between the middle-west and Florida. Many of the thousands of tourists who pass the quaint spot behind beautiful sweeps of lawn dotted with boxwood and shaded by giant oaks and stately pines, even now pause to admire the place and examine the monuments.

Built in 1859, two years after a few devout Episcopalians of distinguished South Carolina families, such as the Rutledges and Blakes, had effected an organization, the original structure still stands. The stained glass windows, pride of the country-side 70 years ago, are faded, but the stately spire remains as of old, as straight and as firm as the day the last workman clambered down from the dizzy tip and looked well content on the job.

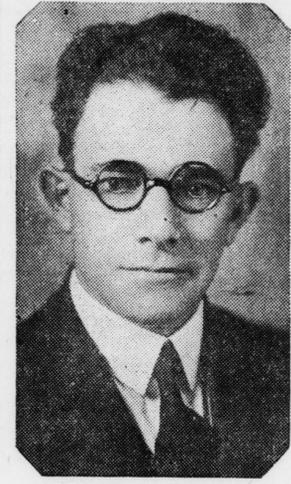
The church stands a monument to the work of devout hands, loves labor in the service of the Lord. Its very brick were pressed by hand in Fletcher and the congregation shed Christian sweat in its completion.

The pioneer house of worship of Episcopal faith in the region, many of the denomination's most illustrious leaders of America, and notables of national and international renown in the world of letters and the canvass, have occupied the gnarled pulpit.

During the War Between the States the church was used by Confederate troops as barracks. In the churchyard still stands an open

Wesleyan Church Revival Under Way

Revival services began in the local Wesleyan Methodist church, Sunday. Rev. M. R. Harvey of Cherryville, is assisting Rev. J. L. Bolen,



REV. M. R. HARVEY

the pastor, Rev. Mr. Harvey is an able minister, with about twenty years experience as pastor and evangelist and song writer. It will be pleasantly remembered that Rev. Mr. Harvey was the minister who successfully aided Mary Hudler, kidnapped by Gypsies, in finding her people in Pennsylvania, recently.

air shed built by Confederate cavalrymen to shelter their horses. Tales of the headless horseman, who haunts the shed, and the fair young maiden who meets her Confederate lover at the old well hard by still cluster around the place.

The churchyard proper contains 24 acres, mostly wooded land, while the rectory property just across the highway contains eight acres—thus providing abundant space for carrying to completion the Open Air Westminster Abbey of the South. In the little graveyard made enchantingly attractive with shrubbery and flowers sleep many of the Rutledges, Blakes and other prominent Carolinians.

The uniqueness of the Abbey lies largely in the character of the individual markers. Each is a large upright native granite erected in its original condition, even to the moss which frequently clings to it. On the front there is a bronze marker of most attractive design bearing the name of the person honored, dates of birth and death, and some significant statement about, or quotation from him or her.

There is a poet's corner, musicians' corner, statesmen's corner, artists' corner and benefactors' corner. Approximately identical in height, the stones are all different in contours of rough surfaces, and erected in rows beneath the dense shade of beautiful white pines and widespread oaks. The whole is being separated by drives and the churchyard proper by a high laurel hedge, giving it an air of privacy almost as complete as if it were enclosed within a stone wall and underneath a roof instead of a canopy of rustling leaves, splashed with the blue of the sky.

In this connection it is significant that no corner is provided for the south's military leaders. None will be, for the originator of this idea believes that keeping war history and war heroes in the background is one of the most effective way of training future generations away from war.

True there is a monument to Robert E. Lee, but it honors his memory not as a great warrior, but as a great leader in education of the young men of the south after the War Between the States, in which he played such an important role.

"To foster prejudice and keep aflame the heat of the Civil War, to create sectionalism and to carry on some phase of history that should be entirely forgotten are absolutely foreign to my dream for this Abbey," declared Mr. McClellan. "I recall Lee's last words, 'Lay aside all these local animosities and train your sons to become Americans.'" With that statement Lee passed from a great Confederate chieftain to a great American.

"The nucleus of my idea," continued Mr. McClellan, "is the Robert E. Lee monument near the main entrance of the grounds. This is the motif of my thought. Lee is here depicted mounted on Traveler journeying into the south. It is Lee facing a new day, the day of his real greatness as president of Washington and Lee college, later

to become Washington and Lee University. We here commemorate not Lee the fighter, but Lee the educator. That was the true Lee. 'He cometh to his own' says the tablet. That is true, and so we want all the noble men and women of the south to come into their own.

"My plans call for a bronze life-sized statue of the Southern Negro Mammy!" exclaimed Mr. McClellan. "I want to see her with her big, wide, white, well-starched apron, her turban, her calico dress and I wish to see her seated in an old-timey rocking chair as if before some great open fire-place in a log cabin on a windy night with spooks prowling about in the dark. I want to see her hands hard with toil and her face — a spiritual face — recalling some of those exquisite spirituals of her race. I want to see all old fashioned flowers a-growing — marigolds, hollyhocks, sunflowers, black-eyed Susans, Zinnias, four-o'clocks, verbenas, forget-me-nots, delphinium, all the flowers the Old Mammy used to love.

"A typical log cabin near this statute is to be fitted up with pictures of the southern poetry-writers, musicians, statesmen commemorated in the out-of-doors Abbey, and their books and old chairs and tables and rugs and clock, cradles and old beds to give the atmosphere of the Old South."

To be memorialized in the Abbey as rapidly as the necessary funds can be raised by groups interested in preserving their names are: Frank L. Stanton, Paul Hamilton Hayne, George Denison Prentice, Philip Pendleton Cooke, Richard Henry Wilde, James Matthews Lagare, Henry Rootes Jackson, Mirabeau Bounaparte Lamar, Lucius Q. C. Lamar, Alexander Beaufort Meek, Theodore O'Hara, William Gilmore Simms, John Reuben Thompson, Abram Joseph Ryan (Father Ryan), Severn Teackle Wallis, James Barron Hope, Margaret Junkin Preston, Edgar Allen Poe, Edward Coate Pinckney, John Esten Cooke, Thomas Nelson Page and a host of others.

"When the memory of these immortals has been honored with granite markers," explained Mr. McClellan, "I want to see the Abbey developed further with little paths winding in and about clumps of ornamental trees and flower beds and artistic benches along the paths. As one saunters about he can see and read the memorial tablets.

"And I want this abbey dedicated by the singing of Old Negro spirituals by trained negro singers on some moonlight night in the summer. Can you get the picture? Can't you feel it?"

Among monuments already dedicated are those of Daniel Decatur (Dan) Emmett, composer of "Dixie;" James Whitcomb Riley, the poet; Stephen Collins Foster, composer of "Swanee River;" William Sydney Porter (O'Henry), short-story writer; Sidney Lanier, southern song-bird; Joel Chandler Harris, creator of "Uncle Remus;" Francis Orrery Ticknor, Georgia's great poet; Francis Scott Key, composer of "The Star Spangled Banner;" Edgar Wilson (Bill) Nye, humorist, and John Fox, Jr., novelist.

In the picturesque vestry room of Old Calvary hangs one of the rarest portraits of Robert E. Lee in existence, for which he sat during the war. It was presented the Abbey by a daughter of the great general as a start towards a collection of canvasses of the south's great, in conjunction with the monuments.

Strange to say, it remained for an easterner to conceive the idea of honoring the south's heroes in this beautiful way, for Mr. McClellan is himself a New Yorker, of the family of General George B. McClellan, of the War Between the States fame.

He was graduated from New York University and Union Theological Seminary in New York City and is known as a writer on historical subjects. Of exceedingly retiring and modest disposition, so far as his personality is concerned, he talks little of himself.

After spending considerable time in California and Texas he came to Fletcher seven years ago to become rector of the old and fashionable church. His whole interest now is bound up in his dreams of the Westminster Abbey of the South, and his enthusiasm is highly contagious.

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FLORENCE MILL NEWS

Florence Mills, Sept. 22.—Mr. and Mrs. Frank Toney, spent the weekend at the home of his father, Mr. E. M. Toney at Sunshine.

Mr. Everett Toney, and mother spent the week-end at Mr. W. H. Whisnants.

Mr. and Mrs. Esper Sisk and children spent Sunday in Shelby.

Mr. A. C. Hudlow and sons, Claude and A. C. Jr., Mr. Horace Hardin and J. D., Mr. Charlie Greene and son Earl motored to Asheville, Sunday.

The children and friends of Mrs. Green surprised her with a birthday dinner Sunday at the home of her

daughter, Mrs. Lawrence Penson. Mr. and Mrs. Weldon Towery and Mr. and Mrs. Roy Raymond and children spent Sunday afternoon at the home of Mr. Towery's father. Mr. Odum Rupp and Mr. D. Taylor are on the sick list. We are glad to know Mrs. Neighbors is improving. Mr. M. G. Godfrey of Kingsport Tenn., spent a few days last week at the home of his father. Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Phillips and children and Mrs. J. P. Richards and children motored to Charlotte, Monday on business.

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