

California Creek Church History Presented

By WILLIAM LEE

The Mars Hill College Appalachian Room Library was the recipient of a historic document for their archives.

The college received the gift of the original church records for the California Creek Baptist Church for the years 1869 to 1885. They were donated by Debra Lee Oliver of Wolf Laurel, who received the book from L.D. Ballard of Mars Hill.

The old records had been in the possession of Flossie Murray Phoenix who died in 1985. It was her grandfather, W.B. Murray, who was the first church clerk, followed by Joseph Marion Oliver, great-grandfather to Debra Oliver.

"We have been trying to track these records down for the last four years," said Richard Dillingham, former director of the Appalachian Room and now curator of the Rural Life Museum. "After Flossie Phoenix's death we had tried to locate the records through her relatives. I'm glad to see them safe."

The book made it full circle, as did Debra Oliver, who first visited Madison County in 1981 doing geneological research on her family. Her great-grandfather, Joseph Marion, was the only one of three brothers who survived the Civil War, surviving the duration as a prisoner of war. He served the California Creek Baptist Church as a clerk and deacon and was at one time Justice of the Peace for Madison County, before he and his family sold their property along Chandler Creek and moved to Kentucky.

"These church records are the foundation to local history of the Mars Hill area," Dillingham said. "Family histories and community history is dependent on these church records."

The 80-page book will be desodified, according to Dillingham, by a chemical process to remove the acidic content of the ink or resin paper.

"Most of this book is non-acetic," Dillingham said in scanning the book. "The paper is rag content, not wood pulp. And the ink is actually a vegetable dye, known as polk berry."

Dillingham explained that wood pulp paper was not used until 1880, and the resin added to the paper turns to sulphuric acid over the years, dissolving the paper.

"The ink from ball point pens is also a solid acid and will literally eat through paper in a matter of months."

It is for this reason that Dillingham encourages churches to preserve their old records and keep new records only on specially treated paper with non-acetic ink.

After the book has been desodified, and microfilm copies made, it will be stored in a fire-proof safe with other archive records at Mars Hill College. Such records are never used for commercial purposes, Dillingham pointed out, but for scholarly research only.

The college must still have an agreement with the California Creek Baptist Church for keeping the original book, otherwise it will have to be returned to Debra Oliver.

"Such a book is priceless to us," said Dr. Richard Hoffman, Assistant to Mars Hill College President Dr. Fred Bentley, and acting Director of the Appalachian Room Library. "It would be a tribute to have this remain in our care and in our archives for the future."



DEBRA LEE OLIVER, center, presents history of California Creek Baptist Church to Dr. Richard Hoffman of Mars Hill College as Richard Dillingham, right, looks on.

Debra Oliver has also made transcripts of the church records, donating a copy to the college library, the Marshall library, and the Mars Hill library.

Founded in 1869, the California Creek Baptist Church was a consolidation of two smaller churches serving the Little Ivy community and the Flag Pond community. A small log building served as the first church until 1876, when a small church and schoolhouse was built on the site of what is now the Deacon's Bench restaurant. The church that is now used as the restaurant was built in 1917 and served as church until 1969 when the California Creek Baptist Church moved to its current site.

Robert Clauhs Commissioned

Midshipman Robert Clauhs of Weaverville has graduated from the U. S. Merchant Marine Academy, Kings Point, N. Y.

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Clauhs, he was presented with a Third Mate merchant marine license

at the ceremony. He traditionally was commissioned as a U. S. Naval Reserve ensign and was awarded a bachelor of science degree.

The Academy is operated by the Maritime Administration of the U. S. Department of Transportation.

Worship Service

The Union Valley Baptist Church of Hot Springs will hold ser-
gimning on July 13. The Rev.
minister to the church, will

preside.

Vacation Bible School Set

The Union Valley Missionary Baptist Church will be holding its Vacation Bible School the week of July 14-18. There will be classes in various crafts for each age group. Refreshments will be served each evening, and a hot dog supper is planned for Friday evening. Bible School will run from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. All children and adults are invited to attend.

Vacation Bible School Set

The Salvation Army Churches of Bonnie Hill and Sleepy Valley will be conducting a combined Vacation Bible School at the Sleepy Valley Church beginning on Monday, July 21 through Friday, July 25. The service will run from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. each evening.

A group from Charlotte, N.C., known as "The Sunshine Express" will be conducting the classes. Everyone is welcome to attend.

For further information contact Lt. Thomas Friddle, Commanding Officer of the Salvation Army Churches of Hot Springs, 622-3359.



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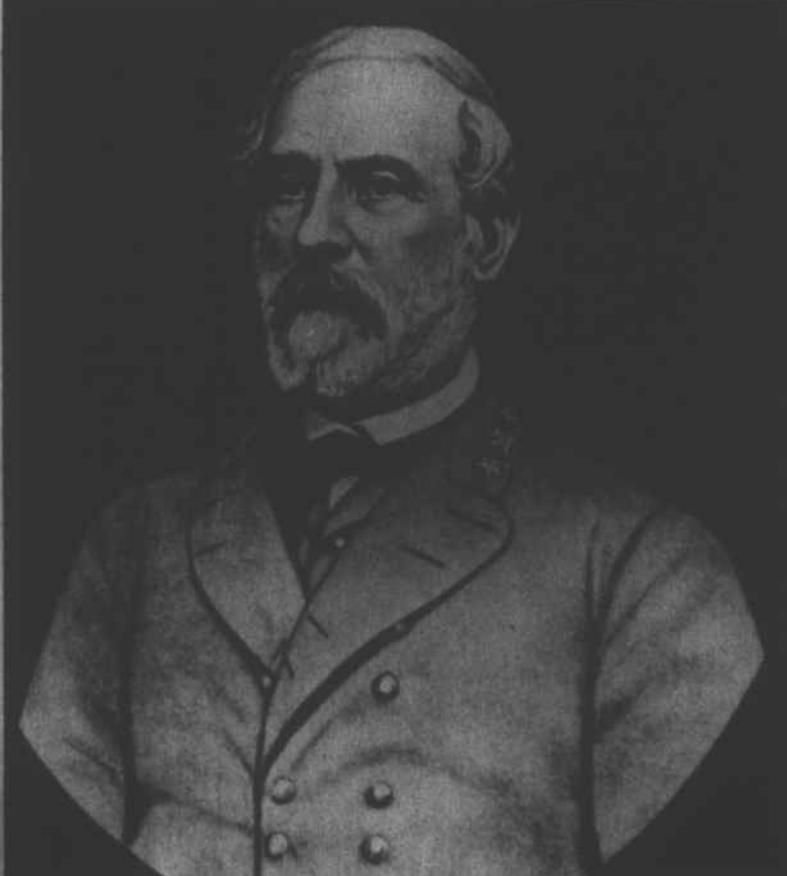




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