

THE CARDWELL CHAPEL
Gatlinburg .1883-1915
Flat Branch .1915-1930
by Glenn Cardwell

The story of Cardwell Chapel (the Methodist Episcopal Church) is best told in three parts.

Early Association with the Emerts Cove Methodist Church

Because the Cardwell Chapel is so closely connected with the Emerts Cove Methodist Church, reference should first be made to that church and congregation. Sometime between 1793 and 1797 the families of Frederick Emert, Martin Shultz, Jr., and Richard Reagan settled in the Emerts Cove area of Sevier County. It is believed that Juliana Shultz, the widow of Dr. Martin Shultz of Sullivan County, came with her son, Martin, to Sevier County. Richard Reagan was the son of Timothy Reagan who had settled on Middle Creek.

In 1805, Peter Huskey entered 57 acres of land in Emerts Cove and later sold it to Frederick Emert.

Intermarriage of these families produced leaders of the Methodist Societies and churches of Emerts Cove and Gatlinburg. The Frederick Emerts had ten children; the Timothy Reagans had eight children; Martin and Barbara Emert Shultz, Jr. had 13 children; Richard and Julia Ann Shultz Reagan had ten children.

These large families created a great concern for erection of a school house in Emerts Cove. Old timers told me that their parents and grandparents told them of a log cabin school house being built in the center of Emerts Cove, which in turn served as a "meeting house for worship by both Methodist and Baptist. Because the school house was used for worship, the Emerts Cove Cemetery was begun when its first citizen, Frederick Emert, died in 1829. Daniel Emert, the youngest son of Frederick and Barbara Shultz Emert, deeded an acre of land in April, 1846, to the Methodist Episcopal Church. This acre of land included the cemetery, and the church erected there served the folk in Emerts Cove from 1846-1886. A memorial marker is placed where the Emerts Cove Methodist Church once stood, and reads as follows:

"On this site about 1875 stood a one room log cabin, the first Methodist church in this area. Many worshipped here during the Civil War. The building was destroyed by a snowstorm in 1886. later, a schoolhouse erected near this site served as a place of worship until destroyed by a flood in 1890."

The above noted marker was placed there in 1970. As stated above, there was a previous school house which served as a "meeting house" before the Methodist Church was built. This is a family history since my grandfather and great-grandfather were class leaders in the Emerts Cove Methodist Church, and both are buried in the cemetery.

The Emerts Cove Methodist Church was in full operation when two Cardwell brothers arrived in Sevier County. Robert Cardwell arrived in Emerts Cove area sometime between 1850-1860. His youngest brother, James Thompson Cardwell, arrived in 1860, and is verifiable since James was listed in the 1860 census for both Grainger and Sevier County. James moved on to the Gatlinburg area with his wife Mary Austin Cardwell and children. Robert and Nancy Mayes Cardwell stayed on in the Emerts Cove area. Both Robert, and James' father, Robert Cardwell, was a Methodist minister in Grainger County. Thus their background and conviction to be class leaders of the Methodist Church were evident.

The Cardwell Chapel in Gatlinburg, Tennessee from 1883 - 1915

As previously stated, the Emerts Cove Methodist Church and families were closely connected with the Methodist movement in Gatlinburg. There were strong family connections of the Reagans, Shultzs and Emerts, but special attention must be drawn to the Richard and Julia Ann Reagan family. Daniel Wesley Emert, son of Richard and Julia Ann, moved from Emerts Cove to White Oak Flats (now Gatlinburg) in 1806. Daniel Reagan was a civic minded man who furnished the meeting house for the village - the five sided building used for school, church, and "voting place." This was located at the "mouth of the lane," now Reagan Drive, near the old River Road.

In Volume I of SMOKY MOUNTAIN CLANS, Donald B. Reagan listed Richard Reagan as a class leader for the Methodist Society. In the "French Broad Circuit," a historical document for the Methodist Church, the Methodist Society is listed as being organized in the home of Daniel Wesley Reagan in 1844. On March 24, 1844, when the stewards of the French Broad Circuit met at Wells Chapel on the old Newport Road, the Methodist of White Oak Flats sent a delegate and contributed \$2.30. At the same meeting, Philip Shultz of Emerts Cove Church brought a contribution of .75 cents.

Class leaders were appointed by the Methodist Conference to see that, in the absence of circuit riding ministers, the Holy Scriptures were taught. Apparently the Methodist Society of White Oak Flats functioned successfully. James Thompson Cardwell most likely had a hand in the Society. In establishing the Methodist Society of White Oak Flats, the families connected with the Methodists did not have to travel back to Emerts Cove Methodist Church for worship.

While the famous Bishop Francis Asbury made approximately sixteen trips into eastern Tennessee between 1788 and 1813, it is not known that he ever journeyed into the vicinity of Emerts Cove or White Oak Flats. He did, however, preach in Shiloh Chapel, Pigeon Forge, October 1808. That chapel has been gone from the scene since 1928. A historical marker in Shiloh Cemetery is left to testify of his visit in the chapel.

In 1883, James Thompson and Mary Austin Cardwell deeded a plot of land to the Methodist Episcopal Church "as a place of divine worship for the use of the ministry and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America." This deed is recorded in Book N, page 333, in the Registrar of Deeds Office, Sevier County,

Sevierville, Tennessee. The plot of ground contained about one-quarter acre, and was served for the erection of a church building and a small cemetery. Both James and Nary, and their son, Clisby, were buried there.

This church and cemetery were at the junction of US441 and US321 where the Polly Bergen shop stands in the 1980's. When the highway was widened in early :950's, the remains of the Dardwells and the others who were buried there were removed and taken and buried in the Glades Lebanon Cemetery.

Not much history of the Cardwell Chapel is recorded during the 1883-1915 span of time. However, it was listed on the Emerts Cove Circuit of 1889. County :istorian, Mrs. Beulah [Ann, listed this circuit and other church history as recorded in the October 7, 1976, issue of "The Gatlinburg Press." Those churches making up that circuit included Belmont, Richardson Cove, Caton's Chapel, Evans Chapel, Webbs Creek, laurel Grove, Gatlinburg (the Cardwell Chapel), and Huskey Grove.

The Cardwell Chapel on Flat Branch 1915 – 1930

Since Robert Thompson Cardwell played an important role in the history of the Cardwell Chapel, it is appropriate to describe him, particularly since he was responsible for having it removed from Gatlinburg to Flat Branch.

A veteran of the Civil War, he returned home, taught school, took over the storekeeping duties in the family store, became justice of the peace, and was a farmer. In her book, THE GATLINBURG STORY, Jeanette S. Greve listed Robert Cardwell as being a teacher in the "free school" of Gatlinburg in 1867. As far back as 1838, each of the ten districts in Sevier County had a "free school" with money being provided by the state so that children of each district could have access to education .

In January 1888, Robert T. Cardwell, son of James and Mary Austin Cardwell, purchased about 600 acres of land on Flat Branch. There he continued his duties as storekeeper, justice-of-the-peace, etc. In October 1985, Mrs. Cora Morton shared the following memories of Robert:

"I remember Robert Cardwell very well. He was a gentle man, of slight build. He went with a limp due to the fact that he had had a stroke, which left him slightly inured. He was most anxious to have the Cardwell Chapel removed to the mouth of Flat Branch, for there were several families and several children there. I recall that the second service conducted in the Cardwell Chapel was the funeral of Robert; this was even before the church building was completely finished. We had had one worship service there before his death, and this church was put on the Pigeon Forge Circuit and the pastor of the Pigeon Forge Methodist Church did the preaching. We continued to have church there for several years. I attended there as a young girl. My family and I went there

until we moved to the Glades section about 1930. It was about that time the church burned to the ground...caught fire in the middle of the night.

“The front of the building faced the Little Pigeon River, with a road going up Flat Branch. Opposite the church on the Flat Branch Road was the store operated by Robert, and later by Bill Perry. Mr. Perry developed a series of cabins for rent, as well as operating a business out of his house and store wherein he lived. Many folks thought since Mr. Perry had a leaning to sell liquor or beer, he did not feel comfortable having a church right across the road. Thus, when the church burned down in the middle of the night, many suspected his having something to do with the fire.”

Mrs. Morton recalled that after the church burned down, the folk up Flat Branch and immediate vicinity began to go either to the Huskey Grove or Pigeon Forge Methodist Church. Mrs. Morton spoke most kindly of Robert and his family, saying he raised a fine family; they were kind and cooperative toward neighbors.

Robert T. Cardwell, born 9 Mar 1844 and died 29 Apr 1915; he was buried in Huskey Grove Methodist Church Cemetery. Insofar as his death occurred in April, 1915, and the deed he made to the Methodist Episcopal Church for one acre of land in December, 1914, we know that the church was removed from its Gatlinburg site sometime between December, 1914, and April, 1915. This deed is recorded in Book 28, page 287, in the Registrar of Deeds Office, Sevier County, Tennessee. A picture of Cardwell Chapel as it looked in its Gatlinburg location is shown in MOUNTAIN WAYS, page 44. The book is published by the Buckhorn Press, Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

In closing, there are several names listed in the Cardwell families as being Methodist ministers. Names such as John Wesley Cardwell, Daniel Wesley, James Asbury Cardwell, or a combination of Francis, Asbury, John or Wesley, testify of strong leanings toward Methodism.