



## The Ebenezer Churches and Cemeteries

Bloomfield, Loudoun County, Virginia



Nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, two historic churches stand watch over one of western Loudoun County's most picturesque cemeteries.

The small stone church, the "Old" Ebenezer Church, was built sometime between 1755 and 1769, on land owned by Samuel Butcher, Sr., who was born near Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1731, and migrated to the vicinity of Bloomfield, then Prince William County, next Fairfax County, and now Loudoun County, Virginia. His will, dated September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1769, includes "and I do give two acres of land to the use of the Baptist Meeting House and School House, the same that the Meeting House is now built upon, to be for that use forever." The will was proved March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1778, and entered in probate April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1778. The will also provided that upon his death, his wife Susanna, would have the "whole use of my plantation on which I now live, until my beloved son, Samuel Butcher, arrives at the age of twenty years", and "I give to my beloved son, Samuel Butcher, after he comes to the age of twenty-one years, the whole plantation that I now live upon." The son Samuel, by Indenture, dated January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1834, refers to land on which the Ebenezer Meeting House now stands, devised to him by his father, Samuel Butcher, who intended it as a place of worship for the Baptist denomination, deeded the plot to two Trustees, their successors and/or assigns forever, "as a place of Worship for the Baptist Society in the Neighborhood". The transfer of "two acres with Old Meeting House" to Ebenezer Cemetery Company, Inc. is recorded as of January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1934 (sic).

An interesting incident in the history of the "Old Church" occurred during the War between the States. In the early morning of October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1863, Colonel John Singleton Mosby and his raiders intercepted a Baltimore and Ohio Railroad train near Duffield Station, now in West Virginia. The train had left Baltimore at 9:15PM the night before, and among its passengers were U. S. Army Paymasters carrying Federal payrolls. The captured Federal money was brought to this place, and in the "Old Church", \$173,000 was divided among Mosby's men – eighty-four equal shares, approximately \$2,000 for each of them. Colonel Mosby declined to accept any of the money; and, being unable to persuade him, his men made up a purse and purchased for him, a thoroughbred horse named Croquette, that he had admired in a pasture at Oatlands. Croquette later became his favorite. The account is chronicled in *Ranger Mosby* by Virgil Carrington Jones.

The tall and imposing "New Ebenezer Church" was built on land deeded to the Cemetery Company by William Gallaher on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1855 "for a new Church". During the period starting about 1831 and running until about 1891, differences in view developed in the Baptist doctrine, and the Church split into "Old School" and "New School". Baptist historians place the division at Ebenezer around 1842, because the "New Ebenezer Church" was constituted under the Columbia Association governing body in that year. Available records do not divulge the exact time of construction of the "New Church", but it or its forerunner, could well have been before the land for it was actually deeded in 1855 – certainly it was built not much later than that date.

An interesting feature of the "New Church" is the perspective painting of the interior north wall of the building, behind the pulpit, giving the appearance of depth, as if an apse is beyond. Our ancestors relate that it was painted by the then youthful Lucien Whiting Powell, who was born in the area December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1846, and at the age of 17, despite a slight lameness caused by a boyhood accident, joined the Confederate forces, becoming a 3<sup>rd</sup> Lieutenant, Company K, 11<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry, CSA. After the War between the States, he studied art in Philadelphia and Europe, and became famous as an artist, living in Washington, D.C. until his death on September 27, 1930. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery, but was disinterred and reburied in Congressional Cemetery, Washington, D.C. on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1932 at the direction of his wife, who subsequently was buried in the same grave in January, 1940.

The "Old Church", formerly called "Butcher's Meeting House", was constituted in April, 1804. Some members of the Goose Creek Baptist Church near Upperville and of the Ketoctin Baptist Church near Round Hill had partitioned for letters of dismission because they wanted to constitute a new church that would be more accessible to them. The "Old Church" records start off with the following: "This church of Christ of Ebenezer was constituted by Elder Fristo in April, 1804, upon the dismission of nine members from Goose Creek and eight members from Ketoctin, who upon request were dismissed for the alone purpose of Constitution". This record book, the only known records of the "Old Church", can be seen at the Thomas Balch Library in Leesburg, Virginia. "Old Ebenezer's" last recorded meeting took place on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1923 when the visiting Elder Horace Lefferts of Leesburg came there to preach.

Westward of the "Old Church" is the "Old Cemetery". The will of John Butcher, eldest son of Samuel Butcher, Sr., dated September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1804, includes: "Secondly, I give and bequeath, at my wife's death, the plantation I now live on, to the use of the Church, formerly called Butchers Meeting House, but now called Ebenezer, to be rented out, 100 pounds to be put toward walling the graveyard, and the balance to go to the use of said church power". The will was proved in Loudoun County on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1805. The stone wall surrounding the "Old Cemetery" probably dates from that period.

The first parcel of land for the "New Cemetery", north of the Churches, was deeded to the Company by "Carpenter" on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1888. The first burial was on October 17<sup>th</sup> of that year, however, a survey of tombstones shows burials were made in this cemetery as early as 1845 which was several years after the "New School" Baptist Church was constituted. Records indicate that some graves were moved from the old cemetery to this one and that the cemetery was first incorporated in 1887. The "New Cemetery" has been in continuous use as a burying ground since that time, and additional parcels of land have been acquired by the Company as needed.

Indexes of burials for both the "Old and New Cemetery" have been recently compiled from the records. There are two hundred forty tombstone inscriptions indicating burials in the old cemetery between the years 1793 and 1905. No written records for the old cemetery have been found. Through the year 2000, there have been two thousand ninety-six burials in the new cemetery, including sixty-one soldiers of the Confederate army, most of whom are buried in the new cemetery.

Copies of both indexes can be purchased by contacting Ebenezer Cemetery Company at the address given at the end of this brochure.

The Ebenezer Cemetery Company, Inc., provides for the operation and maintenance of the "New Cemetery", and for such maintenance, care and preservation of the two Churches, and the "Old Cemetery", as its funds permit. The Company has Memorial and Landscape Funds for these purposes, and welcomes contributions from benevolent persons in memory of loved relatives and friends, and from all who are interested in assisting the Company in the preservation of this historic site. Contributions are tax deductible.

The Kectoctin Chapter of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, has placed a bronze marker at the main entrance in recognition of the historic importance of the Churches and Cemeteries. In 1994, they were placed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Since 1971, the Company has completed many projects to maintain the structural soundness and historical integrity of the Ebenezer Churches. These restoration projects could have only been undertaken with the generous support of friends and patrons. Both Churches have been restored, the old cemetery grounds have been cleared and all existing stones have been reset. A handicap ramp has been built for the new Church and steps put on the front of the old Church. Work has begun on landscape plantings for the cemetery to follow a plan which was approved by the Board and provides guidelines for persons wanting to add trees and other plantings as memorials. As more funds become available, the Company will be able to maintain the Churches and continue with the landscaping of the newer parts of the cemetery.

*Contributions may be mailed to:*  
EBENEZER CEMETERY COMPANY, INC.  
P. O. BOX 174  
PURCELLVILLE, VA 20134-0174

