

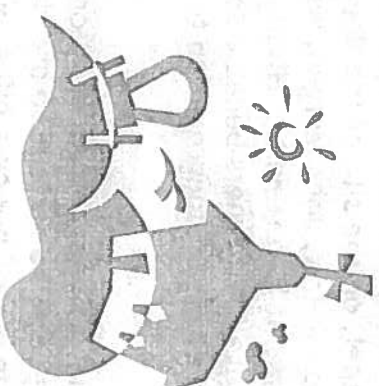
The Marvin Chapel was purchased in 1997

from the United Methodist Conference of West Virginia by the owner of the surrounding Chapel Ridge Farm. The exterior was restored, leaks in the roof repaired, windows replaced, shutters scraped and painted and beautiful new handmade redwood front doors installed. The spacious interior has been painted and furnished and is now being used as an art studio and a meeting place.

Memories, stories and any additional information about the chapel would be warmly received.

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MARVIN CHAPEL



**Methodist Church
Willowbend, West Virginia**

Est. circa 1869

The little white chapel on the Willowbend Road, four and a half miles south of Union, West Virginia, is more than 140 years old. It was built before 1869 by southern sympathizers who broke away from the neighboring Dropping Lick Methodist congregation during the Civil War.

This new congregation was led by Jehu Hank, a parish “exhorter,” who had been preaching at Christy’s Chapel, on the site of the Robert Ash house. His son-in-law, John Morgan, was killed by the Union Army at Fayetteville. His aversion to associating with northerners became so strong that he motivated a faction congregation to start a new chapel.

When Jehu Hank’s daughter, Susan Morgan, died the following year, he refused to use the Methodist Cemetery. He buried her on a hill above the family home on the Willowbend Road (known to many as the Hines home.) The obelisk still stands there, overlooking the old home, which has started to fall away from its stone chimneys.

Originally known with a local name, the chapel was renamed during the early 1900’s as the Marvin Chapel, after a well-respected clergyman in the United Methodist Conference of West Virginia.

The families of Marvin Chapel ensured its prosperity over many years until the last service in

1982, when the Methodist Conference made the decision to discontinue providing traveling preachers to some of the outlying small congregations.

The James Madison Johnson family donated the plot of land upon which the chapel was constructed. (Mr. Johnson’s grandniece, Margaret Clark, provided many of the memories for this history.) The Dick Johnson family provided electrification of the old oil lamps, park benches and picnic tables for the environs, fencing for the yard and donated the steeple for the chapel in the 1960’s. In addition, they gave a bequest which provided upkeep for many years. The Harris Talbot family donated the wedge of land adjoining the chapel which became known as Bluefield Park, the site of many family picnic socials. The Augusta Cleveland Shanklin family, proprietors of the Willowbend store, donated the piano, which is now back in use at the Dropping Lick Fellowship Hall.

Other families that were active in the Marvin Chapel congregation: Beaseley, Ellison, Harvey, Long T. Johnson, Loudermilk, McDaniel, McDowell, Pence, Wickline.

The poignant story of Jehu Hank’s daughter and son-in-law can be read in The Letters of John and Susan Morgan, compiled by Harry McNeer, a descendant of Jehu Hank.

