

The History of Redwine

Redwine Church was founded in 1789 with the cooperation of a Redwine family for whom it was named. Jacob Redwine was the son of Frederick Redwine who was born in Prussia. Jacob was born in Pennsylvania, but he later moved to Montgomery, North Carolina where he served as a soldier in the Revolutionary War. As payment for his war services, he received the deed to the land close to the place where Redwine Church now stands. This land is formerly in Elbert County but now in Hart County. He married Rowena Rhinehart of Elbert County who was buried by his side in the old Redwine cemetery.

The Reverend William Redwine, who was the grandson of Jacob Redwine is thought to be the first pastor.

Although no recorded date for the organization has been found, the accepted date is in the year 1789. It was built when church houses were impoverished log cabins in the wilderness. The first church building was located several hundred yards west of where the present church now stands. At this place is an abandoned cemetery where many of the pioneer families of the church are buried.

In the summer a brush arbor would be built so that the people could worship in the open air. In this arbor, Lorenzo Dow, an itinerant, independent evangelist visited Redwine. Dow was a peculiar fellow who always made his appointments to preach in advance, but he always filled each appointment on time. On this noble occasion, the people have gathered from miles around forming a great concourse of worshipers. Promptly, at the appointed hour, there appeared in the doorway a long-haired, dusty, way-worn stranger who would peep in at the door of the middle pine-pole church and then would turn away. He went outside to a fallen chestnut tree where he mounted the trunk and began to sing lustily. This was his signal for services to begin. He sang, he prayed, and he preached. Sometimes he was astride the log, sometimes he stood mounted on the log. When he finished his sermon he disappeared as quietly as he came. Lorenzo Dow is quite well known as one of the great early Methodist evangelists, His name is listed as such on the marker erected by the Georgia Historical Commission on the front lawn of the present church.

The Reverend Redwine died about five years after the organization of the first church. He had encountered many obstacles in establishing a permanent religious institution at Redwine, but he did not live long enough to see his plans materialize.

The second church was also a log building which was located not far from where the present church stands: This church was used as a school house for one year. Sometimes only a small group of men and women attended the church services which were held on Sunday evenings and Saturday afternoons. They kept working toward their goal and in a few years, the second log church became too small for the increasing number of members.

Some of the most outstanding members were responsible for the growth of the church at this time were:

- Tom Swilling
- Banks Cunningham

- James Taylor
- Jacob Pruitt
- Luther and Parks Cunningham
- B.D. Johnson
- Bill Fleming

These christian men, and others, contributed to the church not only financially. but spiritually.

Mrs Elizabeth Cunningham, who was a faithful and devoted member for many years, gave the four acres of land which belong to the church. In 1957. Mr. Mack Beggs donated 1.3 acres to the church grounds making a total of 5.3 acres now belonging to Redwine Church.

Redwine was on the Hartwell circuit during this period of the church. The pastors were:

- Britton Sanders - 1886-1887
- John W. Baker - 1871-1872
- Levi P. Neese - 1868
- William T. Norman - 1873-1876
- Amicus W. Williams 1859-1870
- W. P. Neese - 1879

When the second log church became too small for the increasing membership. The highest officials of the church decided that the new building must be erected. So a framed church was built in 1878. The Reverend A. G. Worley, who was the presiding elder, preached the dedicatory sermon. A. S. Turner was licensed to preach at this time.

In 1887. Reverend Lundy Howard Harris was sent by the North Georgia Conference to preach at Redwine. On his circuit Redwine, Fellowship, Macedonia, and Royston. He had just married Miss Cora White of Elbert County Mrs. Harris (Cora White) became a famous novelist after her husband's death. "A Circuit Rider's wife" and "My book and Heart" are two novels written by Mrs. Harris. Both of these books give a complete record of her life as the wife of Reverend Harris at Redwine. Some of her stories are humorous, and others are pathetic. Still others are based on the grand revivals held at Redwine Church each summer.

Mrs. Harris' novel, "A Circuit Rider's Wife" was made into a movie entitled "I'd Climbed the Highest Mountain". During the filming of this movie, an investigation of Redwine Church and Community was made for some of the scenes, but since a program of renovation had just been completed on the church and many changes had been made since the writing of this novel, the scenes were filmed near Cleveland, Georgia in order to depict the scenes described in the novel.

The sentiments of Mrs Harris toward Redwine Church can be expressed in an extract from one of her letters written to Mrs. W. L. Hodges, Regent of the John Benson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, in reply to an invitation to be present at the unveiling of the monument to Major Nathan Durkee. This is in part of what she wrote:

"In all of my 'Circuit Rider Stories' I have laid the scenes at Redwine. Of course my heart has never left the people of that church.

I see myself so young and happy among them, so confident of God in his great mercies which in the deepest sorrows have never failed me. I loved everything about Redwine - even the tombstones in the church yard. I think often of my husband who begins there with such ardor and practice of his Beatitudes. I have eaten the bread of sorrow and I have found strength. I am now old and feeble and bereaved, yet I have not lacked for anything that the Lord has promised. I have suffered much, and I have been blessed beyond my merits with so much love from all parts of the earth. I have learned not only to believe in God, but in men and women. I learned this in Redwine Church. I want to thank the good people for all they have done to help me in my life."

This letter was written in 1921. Mrs Cora Harris passed away in 1935.

During this period in the history of the church, some of the most influential leaders were:

- D.H. Agnew
- H. P. Dickerson
- J.H. Winter
- R.B. Pruitt
- J.W. Taylor
- Roland West
- W.R. Johnson
- R.B. Hilliard

Redwine was on the Hartwell circuit for eight years. During this period of the church, the pastor's were :

- W.A. Farris - 1878-1881
- R.A. Seale - 1882
- M.P. Ryburn - 1883
- W.M.D. Bond - 1884
- W.T. Norman - 1885

The church was changed to the Royston Circuit in 1886. While on this circuit, the pastors were:

- Luke E. Johnson - 1886
- Lundy H. Haris - 1887
- M. H. Strozier - 1888
- W. A. Cooper and W.F. Norman 1889
- Ford McRee - 1890
- J.M. Sewell - 1891-1892
- A.H.S. Bugg - 1893-1894
- E.J. Meshburn - 1895-1896
- H.F. Branham - 1897

- E.R. Seaborn - 1898 -1899
- J.A. Reynolds - 1900
- Lovie P. Winter - 1901-1902
- John F. Yarborough - 1903-1904
- W.A. Maxwell - 1905-1908

A third church building was demolished after its erection. A fourth church, which is our present church, was built in 1906. John Mashburn preached the dedicatory sermon, and Reverend W.A. Maxwell was the pastor.

The memorial window in the back of this church was given in memory of Eliza and Lavonia Cunningham. These virtuous women were faithful to the church and community by performing many helpful services to them. They were responsible for the attractive appearance of the church interior.

Some of the very influential and consecrated members during this period of history of the church were:

- D. P. H. Agnew
- John White
- S.J. Beggs
- R.B. Pruitt
- Parks Cunningham
- B.P. Johnson

At this time, Redwine Church was still on the Royston Circuit. The pastors were:

- W.W. Gaines - 1909-1911
- M.A. Simmons - 1912-1913
- F.D. Cantrell - 1914-1915
- F.M. Sullivan - 1916-1-18
- Irby Henderson - 1919

In 1919, Redwine was changed from the Royston Circuit to the Canon Circuit. While on this charge the pastors were:

- M.B. Whitaker - 1920
- J. G. Davis -1921-1922
- F. E. Crutcher - 1923-1924
- D.E. Smith - 1925-1928
- G.G. Ramsey - 1929
- H.V. Hawks - 1937
- Carl Stanley - 1932
- G,T. Shell - 1933-1934 (who was a direct descendent of the noble Redwine family)
- H.L. Gurley, Sr. 1934-1936
- J.W. Goffman - 1936-1937
- W.E. Brown - 1938-1939
- S.T. Sherrill - 1940-1941

- H.,O. Green - 1942-1943
- Frank E. Jenkins, Jr. - 1944-1945
- W.A. Woodruff - 1946-1948
- Charles Chandler - 1948-1949
- C.S. (Bo) Coogler - 1949-1954

On December 20th, 1921, The John Benson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution unveiled a monument at the gravesite of Major Nathaniel Durkee, a revolutionary war hero, who fought at the Battle of Kettle Creek, and who was buried in the old cemetery at Redwine. The Georgia Historical Commission erected a marker on the front of the church in memory of this war hero. Major Durkee was a nephew of General Nathaniel Greene, whose wife gave Eli Whitney his idea for the invention of the cotton gin. Major Durkee gave the income from 1000 acres of land which he owned to promote the invention. His friends maintain that he is entitled to first honor in the praise which is given to one of the greatest inventions in America.

In 1954, Redwine was changed from the Canon Charge to the Macedonia-Redwine Charge. The pastors have been:

- Marion H. Conway - 1954-1960
- Bob L. Bone - 1963-1964
- A.W. Williams - 1964-1965
- C.R. Hill - 1965-1970
- James Wellman - 1970-1972
- Douglas Lott - 1972-1977
- D. Allan Smith - 1977-1979
- Fred Heard - 1979-1982
- James H. McNeil - 1982-1986
- Emory P. Cartrett 1986

During this period, many improvements have been made such as the building of a brick parsonage about midway between Macedonia and Redwine on an acre of land donated by John A. Beggs. The construction of this building was made possible by the hard work and untiring work of the members of both churches, under the ever watchful eye and cheerful words of encouragement and inspiration of the Reverend Marion Conway. The parsonage was completed in 1960 and was first occupied by Reverend Bobby L. Bone, his wife and young son, David. The Reverend Conway never lost interest in the church work at Redwine and when he passed away in March 1972, he was laid to rest in the cemetery there because this was the church of his choice in his retirement years.

Some of the older members and leaders of the church who are now gone but will be remembered for their active participation in all of the growth that has taken place at Redwine are:

- Loy Johnson, Jr.
- Sam David
- L.A. Pruitt
- J. Rush Phillips, Jr.
- John Ridgeway

- Don Morehead
- F.D. (Doc) Nixon
- J. Mack Brown
- Charlie Beggs
- Mack Beggs
- Hugh Poore
- Walter Norris
- Catherine Norris

One of the achievements of Redwine Church was to give inspiration for the ministry to some of the descendents of earlier members of Redwine. Two men who became ministers and are in the Methodist Conference are Frank Moorehead who served as Director of Programs for the North Georgia Conference and Bond Fleming who is now President of Emory at Oxford Jr. College at Oxford, Georgia. J.R. Phillips and Allen Phillips are Methodist ministers.

Many improvements have been made in recent years to make the church a comfortable place to worship God. A far cry from the primitive conditions that greeted the first worshipers, we now have an airconditioned sectionary with cushioned pews and carpeted floors. Much of the interior beauty of the church is due to a generous contribution by Misses Myrtle and Tiny Wooten. The tennis court and basketball area was financed and constructed by the young people of the church.

ORGANIZATIONS

In 1940-1947, the W.S.C.S. (Now know as UMW) was organized under the supervision of Miss Bert Winter who was an active member of the North Georgia Conference for a number of years THE U,M.W. is composed of a dedicated group of church women who seem to instinctively realize the needs of the church and community and work together in harmony and friendship to accomplish many christian deeds.

The M.Y.F. was organized in 1943 and has been a beacon for the youth of the church since. By being a member of this group, the young people develop character and become adult citizens with a desire to carry on the work of the church.

The men's club was organized in 1969-1970 during the pastorate of the Reverend James Wellman. This group of men was largely responsible for the planning of the Fellowship Hall and they provided the stimulus for carrying the project to completion in a short period of time.

All the young married couples of the church are not a formal organization, they have been responsible for many activities that have brought a sense of pride and accomplishment to the entire membership of the church. They have been involved in everything from floats in the Hartwell Christmas Parade to winning volleyball games in local tournaments.

There have been several homecomings at Redwine Church. The first of which we have a record was on June 17, 1934. Another was in 1956, one on June 29, 1973, and the last one on July 20, 1980. On each occasion a large number of former members and pastors have congregated to enjoy this fellowship and receive a blessing.

During the pastorate of Douglas Lott, the church celebrated his own Bicentennial in November 1975, This was a year before the Nation's Bicentennial Celebration. Members dressed in long dresses and overalls as in the pioneer days and enjoyed the day of preaching, dinner and singing.

Thus, for almost 196 years Redwine Church has been an active force in the ministry of God and the history of the surrounding areas. It has advanced in structures varying from a brush arbor to a comfortable air conditioned building. It has produced more nearly perfect citizens, more adequate fathers and mothers, and more secure members of the kingdom of God.

The added vigor of the church group, due to the untiring efforts of both young and old working in harmony toward a common goal, will continue to play this leadership role well into the future.

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