

Collins Chapel

David Collins was an early pioneer to the present day Collins Chapel area west of Malone. Within a year after arriving in 1855 he had made five land purchases totaling over 500 acres. The census of 1860 list David, Wife Susan, Daughters Martha and Frances and two other individuals (perhaps relatives) living in his household. The next document requiring a spouse's name was not Susan. Apparently Susan had died after this census was taken. He probably buried Susan on the corner of his property and designated it the Collins Family Cemetery. She was probably the first interment in Collins Cemetery. A personal observation; in the middle of the Cemetery, only a few feet from the rod iron fence is a nameless grave. It is identified by a huge quantity of large flint stones. In 1860 prior to the availability of local headstones, this would have been the custom of identifying people of stature and wealth. An assumption can be made that this is the grave of Susan Collins. Within a short distance of this gravesite is a multiply gravesite. Four or more people are buried side by side. Any original dividers of decades ago have been reclaimed by mother earth. The outside perimeter is coped with lime stone blocks. Perhaps David buried some of his slaves in Collins Family Cemetery. It would not have been uncommon (especially if they were his domestic slaves working in the home). The census of 1860 was taken in July. The first headstone indicates someone other than Collins was buried in July 1860. The fact of headstones not being readily available in 1860 is an indication it was installed at a later time. In most instances records were vague at best back then and the date was probably estimated. Land deeds indicate on August 12, 1876 David Collins deeded two acres of land and a Church building to the trustees of Collins Methodist Chapel. The trustees were: McAnulty, Mathews, Knowles and Tally. Descendents of these trustees are still known in the community today. At the time of this generous gift to the community there were probably many graves in this Cemetery. Only 13 graves are marked with headstones prior to 1900; however there are probably many unmarked graves that were reclaimed by mother earth many decades ago.

The Church building David deeded to the community was located in the south east corner of the Cemetery. This can be confirmed by the headstone dates. No records have been found to indicate why the structure was replaced. Perhaps it became too small, was razed and the lumber used to replace it. Regardless of the reason, after the turn of the century, a new Methodist Church was constructed. Land owner, John Wesley Baxter donated land adjacent to the previous Church to be utilized for a house of worship. (Deeds for this property were not recorded). Based on the

community needs for a new house of worship, participation must have been very large. For some reason over the next few years participating membership began to decrease. This trend continued until it ceased to exist as an active Church building. The benches and chairs were removed and it cosmetically had the appearance of an abandoned structure instead of a Church. Interviews indicate it remained in this condition for several years. In the donated land contribution from John Wesley Baxter it was understood; should the church become inactive the land would revert back to John Wesley and/or his heirs. John had been dead five years in 1942 and his heirs began pursuing the clause set fourth to revert. This resulted in the structure being offered for sale. Mr. Green Jordon contacted the heirs with a purchase offer. His intentions were to dismantle and reconstruct it into a dry storage hay barn on his farm. The purchasing transaction was made and a time limit was established for the completion. Mr. Carl McDaniel, one of the many who had been a past church member contacted Mr. Jordon with a proposal of returning it back into a house of worship. An agreement was reached and the removal responsibility was passed on to Mr. McDaniel.

The first obstacle to overcome in Mr. McDaniel's plans was the Methodist Congress. His proposal to return it back to an active Methodist Church was denied. This resulted in him contacting the Baptist Association for sanction and a Baptist Charter was acknowledged. In the spring of 1942 Mr. McDaniel undertook the challenge of acquiring land, forming a volunteer work party and moving the structure to a different location. Mr. West Baxter was very instrumental by donating the land joining the Cemetery to the south. In July 1942 Mr. McDaniel organized his work party consisting of; Mr. Will and sons Jimmy and Ducker Culpepper, Charlie and Clayton Anderson, Mr. Bert, Paul and W.S. Mathews, James Baxter, Barney Rodgers and Winson (Tince) Jacobs. With the use of primitive tools and equipment they proceeded to raise the structure and place logs under the floor beams. With Tince's antiquated steel wheel farm tractor they rolled the Church to its present location. The challenge was compounded by the necessity to rotate the structure 90 degrees after placement. The project was most successful and was completed in two weeks. Mr. McDaniel became aware of a Church in Wewahitchka with a large quantity of extra benches not in use. He contacted them and they were acquired as a donation. With the help of Mr. Coy Ham and his peanut truck the benches were delivered from Wewahitchka and Collins Chapel was officially reopened as a house of worship.

NOTE: Some posthumous special thanks are due in this Collins chapter. Even under World War 11 condition, Mr. Carl McDaniel identified something that was wrong on the home front. He had the courage to stand up and correct it. Congratulations are in order to you and your dedicated volunteers. Without the camaraderie and 100 percent of your giving, this Church would not exist today. The community will always be proud of you for standing tall.



Collins Chapel
Today; as it was relocated in 1942

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State of Florida, August 12th 1876.
Jackson County, In witness whereof, these presents, that David Collins of the County and State above mentioned, do hereby grant, bargain and convey unto John M. Anselty, A. M. Anselty, L. B. Shewles, John Mathax, George Whitfield, W. W. Shewles, W. R. Pally, Trustees for Collins Chapel, two acres of land upon which is situated a church building, shown as the South East corner of the South East quarter of the South East ^{1/4} quarter of Section 36, Township 7, Range 9, To have and to hold as the property of the M. E. Church, South.

In witness whereof, I have set my hand and seal in presence of this day, and date above written.

Witness
Mary A. Spaight
Mary D. Millard

David Collins, *[Signature]*