

**From
Cabin
to
Cabin**

**The Life Of
A. Rufus Morgan**

FOREWORD

In recounting the story of my life - "**From Cabin to Cabin**" - I realize, as never before, the debt of gratitude I owe friends and members of my family for their inspiration, encouragement and support to my ministry in the church, in the community, and in my concern for the environment.

May I pay special tribute to:

My mother, Fannie Siler Morgan, for her deeply religious life and her loving devotion to the church, surely one of the strongest influences in my resolve to enter the ministry.

My wife, Madeline Prentiss Morgan, who had such an adjustment to make, from the privileged life of the well-to-do, in Fall River, Massachusetts, to an isolated mountain community in Western North Carolina. In retrospect, I feel such a sense of appreciation for her loyalty to family and home, enabling me to devote my life to church and community.

My sisters - Esther, Anna, Lucy, and Laura - for being supportive in many, many ways.

All of the special friends and helpers in my ministry, especially Bishop Kirkman Finlay, under whose wise guidance I served in the Diocese of Upper South Carolina, and two dedicated church workers, Irene LeSeur and Margaret Marshall, who were unfailingly helpful.

Lucie McCutcheon, who has been friend, secretary and helper in a thousand ways.

Sally Kesler and all of the wonderful hikers who have enjoyed the woods, ferns, wild flowers and mountains with me. Some joined me in a project dear to my heart - the maintenance of a portion of the Appalachian Trail. Many continue this project as members of the Nantahala Hiking Club.

A. Rufus Morgan

September 1980

Drawings by
Helen Warner Hilton
niece of A. Rufus Morgan

CHRONOLOGY

Cartoogechaye Valley, Franklin, N. C.

St. John's, Nonah

- 1879 Built by the Rev. John Archibald Deal
- 1881 Consecrated by Bishop Lyman
- 1881 The first wedding: Alfred Morgan to Fanny Siler
- 1885 Their first son, Albert Rufus Morgan, born and baptized.

Education

- 1906 Graduated from Waynesville High School
- 1910 Graduated from University of North Carolina
- 1913 Graduated from General Theological Seminary, New York City
- 1913-14 Fellow, General Theological Seminary
- 1910-14 Graduate studies in Political Science, Columbia University

Ministry

New York City — 1913 - Deacon, St. Peter's

Penland, N. C. — 1914 - With Lucy Morgan started the Appalachian Industrial School.

Barnwell, Allendale, and Blackville, S. C. — 1918 - Diocese of South Carolina: Ministered to three small churches.

Chester, S. C. — 1920 - Rector of St. Mark's, in-charge of Christ Church, Lancaster, S. C., and started St. Peter's, Great Falls.

Columbia, S. C. — 1926 - Executive Secretary and General Missionary of the Diocese of Upper South Carolina.

1931 - Rector, St. John's.

Franklin, N. C. — 1940 - Diocese of Western North Carolina: ministered to St. Agnes and St. Cyprian in Franklin, Church of the Transfiguration in Highlands, started services in the Church of the Messiah in Murphy, and began rebuilding St. John's Cartoogechaye.

1941-43 - Given charge of St. John's, Sylva, started services at St. David's, Cullowhee, renovating it with \$10,000 given by Women of the Church. Started a church at Cherokee for the Indians with \$20,000 from gifts and from Women of the Church. Built Church of the Good Shepherd in Murphy. Also started services at Hayesville, given charge of Good Shepherd, Cashiers, and started services at Holy Comforter, Andrews.

1945 - First service in St. John's Cartoogechaye

1957 - In charge of 11 churches; retired at age 72. Continued Priest-in-Charge at St. John's Cartoogechaye.

1977 - Retired from the active ministry.



**The Reverend
A. Rufus Morgan,
A.B., S.T.D.**

Those from outside the region who attempt to write about the dwellers in Southern Appalachia paint a grim picture of the settlers who started out bravely from the Eastern Seaboard to venture into the West. As their story goes, when the settlers reached the mountains they suffered disasters of sickness, discouragement, inadequate supplies, and fear of the unknown, and gave up. There was little upon which to subsist but they learned to depend upon the game, cleared small patches of land, and learned to get along without adequate diet and other provisions.

These writers have never gained the point of view that has inspired multitudes of men and women to look up to the mountain peaks and gain the inspiration to live heroically in the midst of the grandeur and the beauty all around them. However, this beauty and grandeur have held multitudes of men and women to the mountain region in spite of hard labor, simple living, and fellowship with the few who lived nearby.

Born in 1885, my own experience reaches back for ninety years to the beginning of life in a log cabin under the shadows of ridges of the Nantahala Mountains where grow the shooting star, arbutus, hepatica, bloodroot, and various ferns such as the harelip fern, the woolly-lip fern, the Christmas fern, the rattlesnake fern, the leatherwood fern, and many others. These and other beauties of the mountains intrigued me as far back as I can remember. So

with the trees: the maples which add red to the spring woods, the silver bell which rings in spring along the beautiful streams, the tulip poplar, wild magnolias, the locust, the yellowwood (*Cladrastis lutea*), and then the whole of the heath family including the rhododendron, mountain laurel, flame azalea, and the fragrant white azalea.

In addition to all of the beauties, there were the activities which might seem a burden to those unaccustomed to them but which to us added meaning to life. There was the open fire, with my mother sitting nearby knitting the stockings for her children and filling in the time with reading from Shakespeare, from Dickens, from Sir Walter Scott, as well as from the Bible. There were the trips to the spring for the supply of water. There was the making of candles in the traditional molds. There was the quilting frame hanging from the ceiling of the living room, let down within reach when quilting was to be done and drawn up out of the way when other activities demanded attention.

Then around the farm there were the activities associated with earlier days - the trips back into the forests to visit, or to round up or feed the sheep and cattle and hogs which ranged the forest during the summer. There is the beautiful memory of a trip with my father back on Fort Butler Mountain and the Wildcat Range in Cherokee County. I still remember the glistening of the dewdrops on the shrubs as we went very early one summer morning. And on that same trip another event took place which I cherish. As we went back into the forest we came upon a log cabin where lived an ancient colored woman, Aunt Clarissy. She discovered that we had started off before breakfast. She would not let us go on until she had placed a small table out in the front yard, cooked biscuits, bacon and eggs, and served us a memorable breakfast.

Then there was the beginning of an education. This started in a little one-room schoolhouse, some two miles further in the country. The schoolhouse had a door, a shutter for another opening, a fireplace, and puncheon (split log) floors and seats. Of course, there was only one teacher, Mrs. Sherrill. I think I never had a better teacher. And from this beginning I think I received my first inspiration to continue to learn. Later on, we children attended the public school in the town of Murphy, two miles in the opposite direc-

tion. Of course, we walked there and back, which was no hardship for us but perhaps helped to keep us in shape for walking the rest of our lives. There were many things that we learned along the way but the most beautiful thing that remains in my memory was one plant of a wild showy lady's-slipper which, so far as I know, has become completely extinct in our southern woods. Part of our walk to school was by rhododendron and mountain laurel thickets along Sycamore Branch.

Even in those days there was trouble with forest fires. Many people had the idea of burning off the woods to let the grass grow for the sake of the cattle and sheep. My father loved the woods and often fought the forest fires in the neighborhood until too late at night. I have known him to come in with his ears blistered from the heat, flushed and very weary. He had dreams of better things. He called our farm "Montevista" because we could look out to the east and see the Peachtree Mountains in the distance. In jest, he spoke of the "Great Appalachian Park and Forest Reserve" long before we came into the inheritance of the national parks. So men lived and dreamed then, and sometimes now we catch a glimpse of the fulfillment of those dreams when we can see the glory of the mountains without thinking first of the dollars which may accrue to our officials and industrialists.

The thing which made the greatest impression on my young life was the religious spirit which permeated the family environment. My grandmother, Joanna Chipman Siler, brought with her a devotion to the church of her ancestors, the Church of England. It was through her influence that the first Episcopal church west of Waynesville, North Carolina, was built. She and her husband, Albert Siler, gave the land for St. John's Church, Nonah. They gave board and lodging to the first minister who came. According to the record of the minister, my mother gave a hundred dollars toward the building of this first church and provided board for the carpenters who worked on the building.

During my boyhood we always had the blessing of the food; besides, we always had family prayers each day. One event might have discouraged more timid souls. My mother had cooked the breakfast and left it on the stove while we went into the living room for family prayers led by my father. When we went back to

the kitchen the breakfast had disappeared. Some neighboring boy who was hungry must have known our habits and just took advantage of the situation. I do not remember any complaints on the part of my mother as she went about cooking another breakfast for the family.

If the church was not ahead of us in our wandering, the family took it with us. After leaving the Valley of the Cartoogechaye and St. John's Church, we found no Anglican church in or near Murphy. So it wasn't long before my family and a family of relatives rented a room in Murphy over a furniture store, made an altar of an old piano box, provided chairs, and began having services. My father was a lay reader and would conduct the services except when a minister would come over from Waynesville or Asheville, conduct the service, and provide the communion for us. Later, the Church of the Messiah, a fitting place for worship, was erected on a lot across from the courthouse on Main Street.

Meanwhile, my mother had discovered that the neighboring colored families had no religious instruction. She invited them to come to our home on Sunday afternoons, assembled them on the back porch, and gave them religious instruction. When the weather was cold they would come into the living room for instruction. Finally, she was able to buy a log cabin just off our property where she conducted a Sunday School as long as she lived.

With this background, it would seem rather natural that my mind should turn toward the ministry. The immediate problem was an education. When I had finished the grades provided in the local public schools, I said to my father, "Daddy, may I go away to school?" His reply was, "Rufus, you know that I have no money to send you to school." My reply was, "I am not asking for money; I am merely asking to be allowed to go". I knew this would mean a sacrifice to him, since I was the oldest boy and helped make the living. He gave his consent. From that time on, beginning with high school and going on through college and seminary, I worked my way through school with the help of such scholarship aid as I could get.

I went one winter for a while to the high school in Andrews; then to a church school in Micadale, just out of Waynesville; and then the last two years of high school I spent in Waynesville.

There, I did chores in the home of Mr. and Mrs. James Thomas for one winter, and another winter I lived in the rectory and did the chores around the house and the church. Mr. Thomas was the son of a man who had befriended the Cherokee Indians after the government had given up trying to catch all of them to take them on the Trail of Tears to the Indian Territory. He persuaded the government to let him use the little money that they allowed the Indians for some of the property the government had confiscated. As a result, he bought the Indians the present Qualla Reservation. While I was working at the Thomas home, a daughter was born to them, and Mrs. Thomas asked me, a high school student, to be godfather for Sara. That has been a blessed experience ever since.

At Grace Church in Waynesville I was a lay reader and helped the minister, Dr. Stone, in the services and also conducted services for a small colored congregation in town.

When I graduated from high school in Waynesville (top of class) I got a job working in a lumber camp on the Indian Reservation. This job furnished me with all the means that I had for entering the University at Chapel Hill. There, I worked as janitor, waited on tables, served as sexton for the church, did babysitting, and one winter ran a rooming house for men students. I worked in the YM-CA and helped with Sunday Schools out in the country in Orange County.

For my vacation in 1909 the Bishop of the Diocese of Western North Carolina asked me to go to Canton and work under the rector of the church in Waynesville to establish a Sunday School. We obtained a site on what was then called "Factory Hill", rented a tent, placed at the entrance of it a large St. Andrew's cross, and called it "The St. Andrew's Tent Sunday School". That was the beginning of the Episcopal Church work in Canton. There is now a St. Andrew's Parish in the town of Canton.

After graduating from Chapel Hill in 1910, I went to the General Theological Seminary in New York City. One determining factor in my decision to take training at the General Theological Seminary was to come in contact with the cultural wealth of the city. I had the good fortune to meet Mrs. Helen Vanbokkelen, the widow of a clergyman. She had season tickets to the Metropolitan Opera. Quite often she did not need her tickets and so gave me the use of

them. In this way I heard a number of the operas and many of the foremost singers from Caruso on down. At the same time a man from Murphy, North Carolina, Stanley Olmstead, was a prominent pianist and lived at the Metropolitan Opera House. He introduced me to other musicians and furnished me with opportunities of hearing them. And one of our seminary classmates, the nephew of Walter Damrosch, often secured tickets for us to Carnegie Hall, to hear Mr. Damrosch's talks. Of course, the New York churches had very excellent music which I was privileged to hear, in places like The Little Church Around the Corner, St. Bartholomew's, and The Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

Besides these musical opportunities I enjoyed the libraries, the art museums, and the natural history museum. I shall always be grateful for these opportunities.

While I was at the Seminary I took advantage of an exchange arrangement between the Seminary and Columbia University, where I took postgraduate work in Political Science. In connection with that work I spent one summer at Valle Crucis in Western North Carolina, planning to write my thesis on a community study there. During that study I was disturbed by the activity of our church school in appealing for old clothes from city parishes to distribute free or at low cost to the needy. I thought that the church should be providing instead some means of livelihood and an inspiration for living. One particular case appealed to me. A young man had come from some distance over the mountain with a pitiful tale. I received directions from him and, as soon as I could, went to see the family. They were in an isolated location, and I found the father of the family winnowing wheat, holding the pans of grain above his head as he stood and letting the grain pour onto the solid rock of the yard. He had had trouble with one leg, which was much shorter than the other. I asked him about his wife who was confined to bed with tuberculosis. I asked about his daughter; she was totally blind. I asked about sending her, a girl in her teens, to the school for the blind in Morganton; he wasn't interested. When I returned I checked up on the possibilities for the girl and was told by the authorities that she not only might enter the school for the blind but MUST. By that time, I had to return to the Seminary and Columbia, but my

friends wrote me that the father of the girl was roaming the mountains looking for "that bare-headed devil" who had sent the sheriff to get his daughter.

Dr. Stone, under whom I had worked at Waynesville, had since moved back to his native state of Vermont. He invited me to come up and help him during my vacation in 1912. I gladly went. After I had done the things which seemed to be needed around the church, teaching Sunday School, lay reading, painting the roof of the church, I felt that he had just invited me up out of kindness, so I looked for a real job. I found one in the drafting room of the marble mill. That gave me good experience and very good wages. In fact, when the management discovered that I was planning to leave, they offered me a permanent job at more money than I received later per year for my first few years in the ministry. In Vermont I greatly enjoyed canoeing on the Messisqua River and down into Lake Champlain.

At the end of the summer, friends invited me to come by and visit them in their summer home above Gloversville, New York. I enjoyed the boat trip down Lake Champlain and Lake George, had a visit with the family, and came to the point of proposing to the daughter, whom I had known quite well in New York City. She talked it over with her mother. The mother said, "No, unless Rufus will determine to go just as high as he can in the ministry of the church." That was not my idea of the ministry and never has been. So I tried to explain that the ministry is for service, not for the position that one can attain. The daughter decided that she must abide by the dictates of her mother. So I gathered my things together early one morning, rode down to Gloversville, bought a blanket, a frying pan and other necessities, and started walking down through Albany and into Boston, a distance, I think of 217 miles. I made it in five days. When I got into the edge of Boston after walking 43 miles that day, I went to a restaurant, got some supper, and went out to find directions to the YMCA. I found a policeman who gave me directions and then as I started off he called to me saying, "Look here, fellow, do you have money enough to get out of town on?" I suppose he was ready to shut me up as a vagrant. The next day was the only day I ever spent in Boston. That night I took the Fall River Boat Line to New York.

I graduated from the Seminary in 1913 and was awarded a fellowship for the following year. That was an eventful year. I became assistant to the rector of St. Peter's Church near the Seminary and served my diaconate there. I had finished most of my work for a Ph.D. at Columbia but I lacked German. There was a young woman, Madeline Prentiss of Fall River, Mass., at St. Faith's Deaconess School who had lived in Germany and since had taught German. She volunteered to help me enough to pass the examination. But instead of my passing, we became engaged and were married at the Seminary Chapel the second day of June, 1914.

After doing a bit of shopping in New York, we went down to Newcastle, Delaware, where I was best man at the wedding of my roommate, Floyd Thompkins, to Josephine Ritchie. From there, after visiting relatives on the way, we went by train to the little flag station of Penland, North Carolina, where I was to work. We set up housekeeping in a little log cabin which I had repaired the summer before, adding a fireplace and chimney. It was on a farm which Bishop Horner had bought from a man who had attempted to start a school but had failed. Our aim here was to provide a practical education for young people of the mountains, giving them the opportunity of learning better methods of orchard growing, dairying, and the various crafts needed for country living such as carpentry and plumbing. Of course, we gave them also training in the usual school curriculum. The National Council of the Episcopal Church had not yet been formed, and so it was necessary for me to go to the churches in the cities and beg for funds to run the school. Our largest gift in those days was from a Mr. Frank Clark, whom we had met in New York; he gave us \$20,000 for our first building.

Besides the school work, I was to do what I could toward establishing the church in a three-county area - Mitchell, Yancey, and Avery. There were still no automobiles in that part of the mountains and so my travel was by horseback when the roads were good enough and on foot when there was too much mud or snow. Lacking church buildings, I would hold services in homes, schoolhouses, or moving picture houses. There was one Episcopal church building in Linville where I held services and where the building had also been loaned to us for our mission work. The woman who had been working there left soon after I came, so I placed an ad in one of our church papers to this effect: "Wanted: a trained churchwoman for a

difficult post in the Southern mountains". I remember receiving only one reply. It was from Miss Irene LeSeur who came and did excellent work there until her death a few years later of cancer. The clergy house next to the church was given in her memory by her brother.

I should like to have stayed on at Penland indefinitely but Bishop Horner had employed the man from whom he bought the property to go out to the city churches and beg for funds in other parts of the diocese, especially Valle Crucis. In doing so this man conceived it his duty to discredit the work at Penland. He also begged for and collected old clothes to be shipped in and sold to the people of the community at Penland. I protested to the Bishop to no avail.

While we were at Penland, my sister Lucy Morgan and I were very much interested in establishing a place for giving the people of the community training in the ancient handicrafts. After I left, Lucy developed the work, getting the cooperation of the local people and marketing for them the articles which they wove or created, thus bringing new life into the community and adding to the income of the families. Lucy has written of the development of the work in her book, "**Gift from the Hills**". The influence of the Penland School of Handicrafts has gone far beyond the community, and the school has gained recognition both in this country and in many others.

Rufus Jr. was born in 1916 and Frances Kathryn in 1917, in Rutherfordton, North Carolina, our nearest hospital which was operated by two faithful churchmen and doctors from Philadelphia.

After my four years of life and work at Penland, Bishop Gary of South Carolina asked me to come to his diocese and take charge of the Church of the Holy Apostles, Barnwell, and the missions in Allendale and Blackville. The first year I was there, two things occurred which added to my labors. It was 1918. The Public School Board had engaged a principal for the school in Barnwell who failed to materialize. They were unable to find anyone else and so asked me if I would help them out. I consented to do so, provided they would get a man to take charge as soon as possible. The work lasted for the full year. The other thing which added to my work was the epidemic of influenza. I was working with the Red Cross

and went through the county ministering as best I could to those who were stricken. I do not remember ever having seen as many deaths as I saw that year.

One of the most heart-rending phases of this work was the county chain gang. As usual in that part of the country then, the men on the gang were colored men. They worked on the roads and were moved about in vans enclosed by metal grating with little protection and few facilities for decent living or eating. I stayed in this work only two years but I made many friends with whom I have kept in contact ever since.

From Barnwell I went to Chester, South Carolina, to become rector of St. Mark's Church and take charge of a small mission church at Lancaster. The warden of that church was also superintendent of the little railroad that ran from Chester to Lancaster, and I always had a pass on that railroad. Both these towns were cotton mill towns. I found my work there very interesting. One Sunday night I was just beginning the service at Christ Church, Lancaster, when I noticed that the host with whom I always stayed picked up his hat and left the church. After the service when we got to the house he was sitting on the porch. I asked about his health. He said he was all right. I said, "Well, I was afraid you were sick". He said, "Oh, no, not sick at all; didn't you see how many were at church?" I said, "How many?" He said, "There were thirteen, and I could not be one of that number."

That part of South Carolina is very strongly Presbyterian. There were the usual Presbyterians and then the ultra-conservative Presbyterians called the "Associate Reformed Presbyterians". We tried having meetings of the ministers and every fifth Sunday a union service. Although I myself am inclined to be conservative, they thought that I was too radical. The word got around that I was a mo-dern'-ist (emphasis on the second syllable).

I discovered that the young people needed some attention, so I organized the Boy Scouts. I think the national office never recognized our troop, since there wasn't a Boy Scout Council in that part of the state. However, we carried on the program, took hikes, went swimming, and tried to develop a playground. When the other ministers discovered my work with the boys, they were offended. They thought that I, a newcomer, should have consulted them

before starting the Scouts. I thought they should have started the work before I came. After I had started the work with the boys twelve years old and up, the younger boys wanted some activity. I had heard that the Wolf Cubs had been started with the English boys, but there was no organization for them here. So I got material from Canada and started our own program.

From that time on I have been connected with the Boy Scouts - as Institutional Representative, Assistant Scout Master, Scout Master, and District Chairman. I was a member of the Boy Scout Board and was awarded the Silver Beaver in 1952 in Franklin. I am now an honorary member of the Daniel Boone Council.

Soon after going to Chester, I discovered that there was a family of Episcopalians at Great Falls, a little community at a power plant down on the river. I went to visit and found that the family was descended from Dr. McCullough, one of the early missionary spirits in the upper part of South Carolina. I held services in their home, then in the moving picture house, and then we built a church and called it St. Peter's because it was on a knoll with large granite boulders. Part of the material for the building was given to us by Trinity Church, Columbia. St. Peter's Church is now a thriving congregation and the one at Lancaster is now a parish.

St. Mark's, Chester, was housed in a building which had belonged to another church. It had a belfrey just over the entrance to the church. One evening I was ringing the bell just before the service. The bell rope came through an opening large enough for a man to get through. It was in a very high ceiling. All of a sudden I received a heavy blow on my head. A thick long-leaf yellow pine board which had been placed over the hole became loose. It very nearly knocked me unconscious, but after a few minutes I was able to go on with the service.

We had a pipe organ which must be pumped by hand. One Sunday evening when Bishop Finlay was there I had engaged a small colored boy to pump the organ. There was no entrance from the church into the organ loft but it must be entered from the outside. Everything went well until after the bishop's sermon. I announced the recessional hymn, the organist took her seat and then turned to me with a despairing look. I realized what had happened, so I rushed out, woke the boy up and he started pumping.

While I was at Chester I received a call to become rector of St. James Church, Marietta, Georgia. The vestry invited me to come down to look the situation over. I went, was very much pleased with the prospect, and accepted the call. Of course, Bishop Finlay learned what had happened and asked me to come down to Columbia where I met with him and Governor Manning, who was a member of the Executive Council of the Diocese. They tried to persuade me that the diocese needed my services in some work they had been planning. They wanted me to become Executive Secretary and General Missionary of the Diocese of Upper South Carolina. I protested that I had already accepted the call to St. James Church, Marietta. They proposed that they write to the vestry of St. James Church to see if they would release me. As a result, I did not go to Marietta but moved to Columbia and for nearly five years carried on the work as planned by the bishop and the governor. I had my office in Trinity Parish House along with Bishop Finlay. In the work as General Missionary I discovered that there were a few churches which had been closed, others which for the time being had no resident minister; and there were other places which needed to have work started. So I was kept busy holding services all over the diocese, talking to congregations which had resigned themselves to being without a minister, and trying to revive work wherever possible. At the same time I was Secretary of the Diocese and Editor of the diocesan paper, **The Piedmont Churchman**.

This work continued until the worst depression in our memory occurred. As a result of it, the Church was forced to make various adjustments. The Diocese of Upper South Carolina decided to give up the office of Executive Secretary and General Missionary. It happened that in 1930 the Reverend Dr. G. Croft Williams decided to give up his work as rector of St. John's, Columbia, and devote his whole time to teaching at the University. He had been holding both positions for several years.

St. John's Church had a lovely new stone building which had just been erected and had a considerable debt on it. The congregation was also in debt for the pipe organ in the church. I was called as rector of the church. Members of the congregation had the idea that my first task was to get the debts paid off. My reply was that the first task in any church was to build the spirit and if that



St. John's, Cartooguchay



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The Cabin, Cartoogchaye



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became vital enough the money would take care of itself. We gradually paid off the debt, though we did not consider it our primary obligation.

St. John's was accustomed to a part-time ministry. They were not able now to pay the full salary of a minister, but there was a mission church down in the mill village without a pastor called at that time "Trinity Mission". I was asked to take charge of it along with the work at St. John's. There was another work of the diocese which had become active a few years earlier in which I had a part. That was our program of summer camps and conferences for the young people. These were begun in 1923, culminating in their being centered at Kanuga Lake. Bishop Finlay had been active in these camps and conferences and dominated the picture at Kanuga. I had been working with him in these projects and had become what amounted to business manager of Kanuga. At his suggestion, therefore, my salary was made up from St. John's, Columbia, from the Diocese, and from Kanuga Conferences. This was not an ideal arrangement but under the circumstances it seemed the wise plan to follow.

At St. John's, Columbia, there was much work to be done. First was the building up of the spirit of worship and devotion. We had a small frame building which housed Sunday School and parish activities. On the grounds around the church there were still large blocks of stone left over from building the church. With whatever help I could get, I moved these stones into a circle on the grounds, where they served as seats for the young people in their out-of-doors meetings. I planted roses, camelias, dogwoods, and other shrubs on the grounds. I brought white pines from the mountains and planted them. Two of them still stand (1977). Later, when the new parish house was being built, my circle of stones and the planting around it were destroyed. However, my friends, the Rodney Garys, sharing my love for roses, took up one of the roses, planted it in their own yard, and later gave it to me to plant at Nonah, my grandfather's home, which I occupied at the time.

While at Columbia, I was active in the ministerial association, was chairman of the Red Cross, and did a lot of visiting in the tuberculosis sanitarium, in the hospital for the insane, and in the penitentiary.

In Columbia we organized a group interested in the parks. We would meet and have tennis matches, informal suppers, and other activities in Maxie Gregg Park. It was probably under the influence of these activities that we became interested in beautifying the streets. We formed the "Dogwood Garden Club" of which I was the first president. We planted dogwoods along Wheat Street and several of the side streets; they are still thriving (1977) and so is the Dogwood Garden Club.

Near the close of the 1938 season at Kanuga, the Right Reverend Kirkman George Finlay died there of a heart attack. As a result, so far as I was concerned, the heart dropped out of everything, both in the Diocese of Upper South Carolina and at Kanuga.

In Columbia, the harmony which had characterized Bishop Finlay's Episcopacy seemed to evaporate. There were jealousies and misunderstandings. As if in answer to my personal needs, the Right Reverend Robert E. Gribbin, Bishop of Western North Carolina, told me that the minister who had been at Franklin was leaving and asked me if I would like to take charge of the work there. I had been dreaming of getting back to the mountains ever since leaving them in 1918. So, after some correspondence and discussion, I accepted Bishop Gribbin's offer and took charge of the work centered at Franklin on All Saint's Day, November 1, 1940.

I continued work during the summer at Kanuga but with the new membership on the board and the new director, the spirit of the place changed. So, after a couple of years, I resigned from that work too.

Bishop Gribbin had asked me to take charge of St. Agnes Church, Franklin, and the Church of the Incarnation, Highlands, and, temporarily, to conduct services at the Church of the Messiah, Murphy. This I undertook gladly. But I soon realized that the work could not stop there. In addition to the work at these three churches, I soon discovered that nothing was being done at St. David's Church, Cullowhee. So I went and held services for the students at Western Carolina College. The church building was in bad repair, so I used some funds which had been given me by the congregation in Columbia to make such repairs as would prevent further deterioration. Later, in 1958, the Women of the Church (National) gave us \$10,000 to renovate the church and to add a wing for student ac-

tivities. St. John's Church, Sylva, had been under the minister at Grace Church, Waynesville; however, it had received scant attention. I had protested to the Bishop that we were missing an opportunity there, so when the rector of Grace Church left in 1941, Bishop Gribbin turned the work at Sylva over to me.

While working at Murphy, I discovered that there were a few members of the Episcopal Church in and around Andrews, sixteen miles away. I started visiting them and we decided to rent a room for services under the public library building in Andrews. Mr. and Mrs. Roger A. Dewar were particularly helpful in this work. We continued services and visits there until my retirement.

I found that St. Cyprian's Church for colored people at Franklin was being served by the Archdeacon for colored work who lived in Asheville and came out once a month for services. I offered to hold services there the Sundays he was not present.

About the time that I returned to Franklin, I heard that there were some few members of the Episcopal Church on the Qualla Cherokee Indian Reservation. I started visiting there, and then held services in private homes, in dormitory sitting rooms, and in the Council House. Ultimately, through the help of the Women of the Church, who gave us \$20,000 from the United Thank Offering, we built the Chapel of St. Francis of Assisi and the Community Building next door. I was particularly interested in this work, since my ancestors had moved into the area when it was Cherokee Indian country and had had friends among the Indian population.

Our congregations at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Cashiers, were people who lived there for the summer, but I had the responsibility of getting clergy who were on vacation to hold services there when I could not. We realized the need for a clergy house to provide a place for the supply ministers to live. The Diocese made it possible for us to erect such a dwelling.

At Murphy we had for a while a Church Army Sister who was particularly interested in the colored people; she started a Sunday School and I soon realized that some of those who were attracted to the church were descendants of families who had attended the Sunday School that my mother had conducted for them years earlier. With this interest and with help from the Diocese we pur-

chased a plot of ground and built a simple chapel for them. Since that time, the progress of integration has prevailed enough to have this group join with the congregation of the Church of the Messiah, Murphy, and do away with the chapel expressly for the colored people.

Even before I came back to the mountains, I had been distressed over the fact that the original building of St. John's, Nonah, the first Episcopal church in this area, had been abandoned by the Church under the theory that the country people should go into town for their religious worship. Some of those who had loved ones buried around the church apparently had the idea that the place would grow up into wilderness and so had the graves moved to a plot in the cemetery in Franklin. Among those which were removed were the graves of my grandparents, an aunt, and two uncles. They wanted to move my mother's grave and those of two infants. I objected. So, before I came up to live, I would spend a little time each summer cutting out the underbrush and giving evidence that somebody cared. I had heard that the Trustees of the Diocese were planning to sell the land that my grandparents had given. I wrote to them and asked them not to sell it but if they did to give me a chance to buy it. They did not sell.

About the time that I returned in 1940 I became convinced that the church of St. John's must be rebuilt. I remember working in the churchyard, stopping to rest, and discovering that in the change in my pocket I had a few pennies. I did not know where the rest of the money would come from, but I decided then and there not to spend another penny until St. John's was rebuilt. There were large white pine trees in the churchyard which were thoroughly matured; I had them cut down, sawed into lumber, dried and dressed, and the material was used for paneling the inside of the present church. In those days the National Forest Service would give logs from the forest to country churches to erect their buildings. I got logs from them for the framework and weatherboarding, rented a small shingle mill and sawed the shingles for the roof. Friends in Columbia, who had lost a son in the First World War, Howard and Sadie Reid, gave the six stained glass windows.

When I was ready to lay the foundation for the church, I asked my relatives if I might have the tombstones that were left ly-

ing around to put into the foundation. They agreed. At the cornerstone I placed the tombstone of my grandmother, Joanna Chipman Siler, since she more than anyone else was responsible for the original St. John's. The other stones are on the south side of the foundation. My grandfather's stone was moved to Woodlawn Cemetery and the names of the other members of the family inscribed on it. Later, when I expanded the chancel, there had been a meeting of the Siler Family where attention was called to the fact that my great grandfather William Siler's stone which had stood in the Methodist graveyard in Franklin had fallen down. We older members contributed enough to put up a new stone. The chairman of the committee asked what should be done with the old stone. I told about the stones which I had used in the foundation of St. John's and suggested that Grandpa William's stone should accompany them, since he had owned the land where the church stands. And so it was done.

Finally the church building was completed in 1945 and we held our first service there in that year. Bishop Gribbin came to St. Agnes for his regular visitation and I took him out to the new St. John's. He looked over the building inside and out and as we stood near the belfrey he said, "Rufus, what about the money?" I said, "What money, Bishop?" He replied, "The money for building the church; how much do you owe on it?" I said, "Bishop, I have not gone in debt for a penny of the cost". He seemed relieved.

Soon after his consecration as Bishop of Western North Carolina in 1948, Matthew George Henry consecrated the little church. But that marked just a new beginning. The graveyard was desolate, with depressions here and there where graves had been. Since the new church was built on the spot where the old church stood, I deemed it important that the cemetery should be used again. The beginning was made possible through a legacy left to St. John's of \$1,500 by a faithful member and treasurer of the Church of the Incarnation, Highlands, Mrs. Storey. With this in hand, I went to the Clerk of the Court and drew up articles of incorporation of the St. John's, Cartoogechaye, Cemetery Trust Fund. The papers of incorporation provide that the principal of the Fund shall never be spent but that the interest is to be used for the upkeep of the cemetery. Many people have bought lots for the burial of

themselves and their loved ones. Before the Fund was started, while I was building the church, a neighbor belonging to another faith would often come by and chat with me. He often reminded me that when his time came he wanted to be buried there. So, after his tragic death I buried him where he requested. In appreciation for this act, his family worked faithfully trying to keep the cemetery in good shape. Through their labors for several years they paid for the family burial plot.

Knowing that I myself wanted to be buried there at St. John's, I wanted to decide for myself the sort of stone to be placed at my grave. So I went back into the mountains with Mr. Angel, who had a monument works, picked out the rough native stone I wanted, got him to take it in and letter it with my name, date of birth, and the inscription, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory". I left the final date for someone else to inscribe later.

After this I realized that I had tried to make provision for the departed, and my thoughts then turned to the future of the church itself and the formation of another corporation. Since the church had been deserted by the authorities in the church once before, I realized the distinct possibility that without some definite provision the same fate might overtake the present church. The original St. John's had been named "St. John's, Nonah" because Nonah was the name of the little postoffice located in my grandfather's home. The name means "an evergreen tree" in the Cherokee Indian language. Since the postoffice is no longer there, we call the new St. John's by the name of the valley in which it is situated, Cartoogechaye. But for this new corporation I thought it was fitting to indicate the ongoing work of the church in the community. So I called it the St. John's, Nonah, Foundation. Again I made the provision that the principal sums, including future gifts, should be put at interest but never spent. Only the interest is to be used when needed for the ongoing work of St. John's. This Foundation was established in 1971. From the time of the establishment of this fund, I have hoped that the interest from it would not have to be used while I am living.

Another source of small income for St. John's is the printed material. For something like forty years I have been sending as Christmas cards small verses of my own. Friends in Columbia who had received the cards suggested that the verses should be printed

in a small booklet. We called this printing **Radiant Light**, with illustrations by Sally Kesler. Those who wanted the booklets, paid \$1.00 a copy for them. After the printing bill was met, additional money came in. I did not feel that it belonged to me so I just turned it over to St. John's Church. The original printing of **Radiant Light** was exhausted and so we added the messages that had gone out since the first printing and had the booklet reprinted as **Radiant Light II**. People began to ask questions about St. John's, its history, its prospects. I tried to answer some of these questions in another little booklet called "**History of St. John's Episcopal Church, Macon County, North Carolina**". These histories have been sold for \$1.00 a copy and this money has gone to St. John's. We also had some notepaper printed with a picture of St. John's designed by my niece, Helen Warner Hilton. The income from these printings has also helped St. John's.

In 1900 the Reverend John A. Deal, our first Episcopal minister in this area, had had the Chapel of the Ascension built just across the mountain at Rainbow Springs. At that time there was a rather large lumber operation in progress in the community. There was also a tourist hotel nearby, so the building of the chapel seemed advisable. However, in time the hotel burned down and those who had worked at it moved away. The lumber in the area was exhausted and this took away most of the rest of the population. So the church was torn down, the materials bought by a neighbor and used in the construction of a modest home. The handmade altar from the church was moved into this home, which belonged to a relative of mine. When I began constructing St. John's church, this relative told me about the altar and said that if I could use it at St. John's, I might have it. So at the propitious time we had it brought to St. John's and two of my hiking friends, one from Columbia, the other from Charlotte, came up and spent a week cleaning up the altar and putting it in shape for use. There remained one family at Rainbow Springs who were connected with the Episcopal Church. There is no other church in the community and they kept asking about having a church. While we were thinking about it, I went over Sunday afternoons, as often as I could, and held services in one room of an abandoned schoolhouse. Finally, with the help of one of our members and his small granddaughter, we gathered

fieldstones and hauled them to a site on the four acres which the church still owned. And then we built with them a simple open-air chapel. We built the stone walls about eighteen inches high, built the floor of flat rock from a quarry on Silver Mine Creek, supported the roof with locust posts, built the altar of fieldstone, went over to a marble mill near Murphy and had the top of the altar made in marble. Since its erection in 1961 we have held services there during each summer on Sunday afternoons at four o'clock.

Of course, during these years there have been many activities outside the worship in the church. In this section of North Carolina, the various communities have been organized for improvement of the life of the people. I was the first chairman of the organization in the Cartoogechaye Community. For several years this organization was very active and won much interest. However, when the time came that I could no longer function on account of failing eyesight and hearing, it was impossible to find anyone else to direct the work, so the organization folded up.

Throughout my ministry I have been interested in the native crafts. I was instrumental, with my sister Lucy, in establishing the Penland School of Crafts. In a smaller way, I have helped make provision for weaving classes and other crafts lessons in buildings owned by St. John's Church, Cartoogechaye. This work is carried on now by Sally Kesler, a very efficient and talented craftswoman.

Soon after I returned to Franklin I joined the Lions Club. After I had been a member for some twenty-five years, I was made an honorary life member. When I had serious eye trouble, the Club generously gave me a watch for the blind. Later when they discovered that my backpack had been used for 30 or 40 years and needed repair, they gave me a handsome new pack. I still enjoy the fellowship in the Club.

In 1951 I moved from the town of Franklin to my ancestral home, "Nonah", on Cartoogechaye. I had enough pasture land so that for several years I raised my own meat - pork, lamb, beef, chicken - and had milk goats. I raised a large part of the food there on the farm. I also kept bees and enjoyed their honey. In 1953 the citation "Honor Farm" was awarded to Nonah by the State Depart-

ment of Agriculture for practices in soil conservation, pasture renewal, and the like.

I have found the ferns of the Southern Appalachians a fascinating study, and have become well acquainted with most varieties in this area. I used Dr. Bloomquist's book, **Ferns of North Carolina**, for identifications. On one trip I was looking for a plant of historic interest, *Shortia*, along the Whitewater River in Oconee County, South Carolina. Before finding the *Shortia*, I came across a fern which resembled *Ebony Spleenwort*. Upon more careful examination, I discovered I was mistaken. I took a frond from it, carried it home, looked for it in Dr. Bloomquist's book and failed to find it. I sent the frond to him and asked him to identify it. After many weeks he wrote, apologizing for his delay and saying he had had trouble in getting it identified in the Southeast. He sent it to the Smithsonian Institution where they identified it as ***Asplenium Monanthes***. But they doubted its having been found in these mountains and asked Dr. Bloomquist to verify the find by specimens and photographs. Not being able to come himself, he sent members of his department whom I led to the location. The men at the Smithsonian said it had never been reported this side of Arizona and was found largely in Mexico. Dr. Bloomquist published an article about it in the *American Fern Journal*. When I asked the botanists from Duke how this fern could have wandered up here to these mountains from the west they said they were convinced that the fern had gone by spores carried by birds or the wind from these mountains to the western areas.

The rare plant, *Shortia*, has been one of my favorites for many years. Its history is interesting. The French botanist, André Michaux, (1746-1802) discovered plants (no flowers) of what was later named *Shortia* in 1788. His pressed specimens were placed in the Jardin des Plantes in Paris where they were seen in 1839 by Asa Gray, then a professor of botany at Harvard. With the plants was a note that they came from the high mountains of Carolina. Twice before the Civil War, Asa Gray went to the Carolina mountains looking for the plant but never finding it. From specimens of the same genus which he received from Japan, Gray predicted the blooms and named the American plant ***Shortia***, for his friend Dr. C. W. Short, a physician and a professor of botany at Transylvania

University in Kentucky. Dr. Short never actually saw *Shortia*, the plant named for him.

In 1877, G. W. Hymans (1861-1952), a North Carolina school teacher, found *Shortia* on the banks of the Catawba River - an outlying colony, beyond the mountains. In 1879 Asa Gray, with Professor Charles Sprague Sargent (1841-1927), head of the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard, went to North Carolina and also found *Shortia* on the Catawba. And finally, in 1888, Professor Sargent and the botanist at Biltmore House, Mr. Boynton, found *Shortia* near Sapphire, North Carolina, on Bearcamp Creek.

The next year, in 1889, Mr. T. G. Harbison of Highlands found *Shortia* in the Blue Ridge gorges near where Michaux had originally found it. Mr. Harbison took away wagon loads of the plant and distributed it to many areas where it is still growing.

In later years, Professor Ralph M. Sargent and I also located the plant near the Horsepasture River and the South Carolina-North Carolina border. In the early 1970s the Duke Power Company flooded the dam at Jocassee to impound water for the steam and cooling of their nuclear plant at Keowee.

It has been a source of great pleasure to me that cultivation of the *Shortia* plant has been successful in this area of North Carolina (Macon County) and that we have been able to share its beauty with many friends.

Soon after my return to the mountains, I realized most painfully that the church was neglecting the rural work. After much thought and study and persuasion, I received permission to organize the Southern Rural Institute on the school property at Valle Crusis, owned by the Church. This center was intended to orient theological students to the needs of the rural work and to give them initial training in rural work. During this time I was chosen as "Rural Minister of the Year for North Carolina". Then, as a result of my interest and work with the rural life of the church, the General Theological Seminary awarded me the honorary degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology (S.T.D.) in 1943.

In this work with the Institute, the Reverend Cliff Samuelson was a very great help. He was in charge of the rural work of the National Council.

Among the activities of the students were trips to Hanging Rock and Grandfather Mountain. I had been familiar with the trails up Grandfather Mountain through camping out at the foot of the mountain with my two children during my vacations when I lived at Chester, South Carolina. We hiked all over the mountain and I took every opportunity available to climb it until 1928.

During the summer of 1928 I took my first climb up Mt. LeConte in what is now the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. From that time to the present, that area has been my favorite for mountain climbing. I had been up Clingman's Dome, which is the highest peak in the Smokies, and up Mt. Guyot, the second highest. They are both on the Appalachian Trail. Mt. LeConte is the third highest peak, 6593 feet, but is five miles off the Appalachian Trail on a spur ridge in Tennessee. It has a lodge on top with accommodations for some forty guests. There are no roads up this peak but there are five hiking trails. Each trail has its attractions, depending largely on the time of year and the wild flowers along the way. Up to the present time (October 1978) I have climbed this mountain 173 times.

The LeConte trip is more than just a hiking trip. It has become a spiritual experience. Usually the hikers reach the top about the middle of the afternoon. After getting located in the Lodge we have time for a rest until six o'clock supper. If the weather is suitable we go out to the west end of the mountain called "Cliff-top" for the sunset. While there we turn to the things of the spirit, singing hymns, reciting poems and quoting scripture while enjoying the descending sun. This setting inspired a couple from Philadelphia to ask me to conduct their wedding ceremony on this spot. After some communication and arrangement, we had the beautiful ceremony there.

After a good night's sleep, and again if the weather is favorable, we arise before daylight to go to the eastern end of the mountain, "Myrtle Point", to witness the daylight and the rising sun over the main ridge of the Smokies and the bordering ridges. Here again we share devotional hymns, poems and prayers. At times we have celebrated the Holy Communion on this point.

On most of our trips we have taken interested friends with us. They, with other guests at the Lodge, usually go with us for the

sunsets and sunrises. After the sunrise we enjoy an abundant breakfast at the Lodge and then descend the mountain. When possible we like to descend by a different trail from the one by which we came, for the sake of variety.

While this trip to LeConte has been our favorite for some forty years, there are other trips and climbs which we have enjoyed, both in the Smokies and along the Appalachian Trail, in the Nantahalas, and in the Blue Ridge. In the Smokies, there is Siler Bald, which is named for my great-great-uncle, Jesse Siler, who at one time ranged cattle in the large acreage which he owned there. In the Nantahalas there is another Siler Bald named for my great-grandfather, William Siler; and also in the Nantahalas, Albert Mountain, named for my grandfather. All three of these peaks are on the Appalachian Trail.

When I first came home in 1940, the Appalachian Trail was in need of someone to keep the Nantahala section of fifty-five miles marked and usable. I volunteered to undertake the work. Sometimes I would get Boy Scouts to help me and sometimes other volunteers. Gradually I could not see enough to paint the white blazes on the trees to indicate the hiking route. And so a small group was formed as the "Nantahala Hiking Club", the members of which helped with the work on the Trail. That organization met at my home, "Nonah", until it was destroyed by fire in 1975. The Club now has more than a hundred members and is the most active general organization in the Cartoogechaye Community, holding its meetings in the Nonah Craft House. In connection with my work on the Appalachian Trail, I have been a member of the Appalachian Trail Conference and at times a member of the Board of Directors. I am an honorary life member of the Appalachian Trail Conference.

I spoke above of the fire which consumed my home "Nonah" in 1975. When the fire started I was attending a meeting of the Franklin Lions Club, of which I have been a member for over thirty years. The house and its contents were totally destroyed except for my freezer. My books and records, accumulated over the years, were gone. I lost many carved and plastic figures of St. Francis of Assisi. Many other items of intrinsic value were destroyed. I had given "The Cabin", the log house which was the first home that I could remember, to my daughter Frances, and "Nonah" to my son

Rufus Jr. But I still had six and a half acres of mountain land and began to think of rebuilding. Meanwhile I lived with my daughter and her husband, Don McLean. When friends heard of my disaster they immediately began to make contributions to a special fund which made rebuilding possible. Don McLean generously supervised the building and did a wonderful job of construction, emphasizing insulation. After searching, I found a log cabin about a hundred years old which I bought, together with its stone chimney. The logs are the walls of my present living room and the chimney has been rebuilt. The house is very comfortable and I am happy with it. It is in the midst of white oak woods. I have named it "Talohi" which is the Cherokee Indian name for "white oak woods". There are many dogwoods on the place, wild spikenard, pink lady's-slipper, pink trillium, mountain laurel, and rhododendron. I am leaving the building and the plot of ground to St. John's Church for the residence of the minister when I am gone.

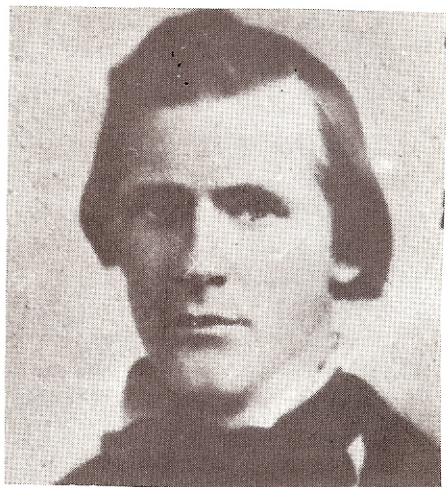
Perhaps it's just as well that I can't see too far into the future. I designed and built the church, not knowing what the future holds. Its capacity is listed as 36 in the congregation. It has become popular enough for our summer congregation to overflow the church so that folding chairs and benches must supplement the pews. We are beginning to ask the question as to whether we should enlarge the church. That would be a difficult thing to do without spoiling the design of the building. That and other developments must be left for the future. I am only grateful that God has given me the privilege of reviving this work after receiving so many blessings and gifts from Him in the past.

A. Rufus Morgan

November 1, 1977



JOANNA CHIPMAN



ALBERT SILER



THE CABIN AT PENLAND

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