

CHURCHES OF BIG STONE GAP

By JULIET KNIGHT

Presbyterian Church

The present Presbyterian church was organized in the days of the "boom" of Big Stone Gap, 1890. Rev. Jno. E. Wool, a native of Petersburg, Va., was the first pastor of the congregation. First Presbyterian minister to preach in the Gap was Rev. Isaac S. Anderson, D. D., now of Rose Hill, Va. It is an interesting historical fact to note that the Rev. Anderson, the first white baby to be born in the city of Bristol, Tenn., came to the Duff home at the head of Wallen Creek in Lee county, in the spring of 1877, and during that summer he rode horseback across Powell's Mountain and up the Wild Cat Valley to the present site of Big Stone Gap, and preached his first sermon in this section under the large beach tree on Imboden Hill, which still stands in the yard of Mr. J. H. Mathews. Dr. Anderson also preached at the Seminary in Turkey Cove regularly beginning in the summer of 1877. He returned to his headquarters on Wallen Creek via Pennington Gap, Rose Hill and Jonesville, preaching all through Lee county. He now lives at Rose Hill, and has been in continuous service in the ministry of the Presbyterian church in Lee, Wise and Scott counties for the past forty-four years.

Mr. William McElwee was for many years the leading layman in the congregation, and superintendent in the Sunday school. A vacant store building which stood on the corner where Hisel's Meat Market is now located was fitted out for preaching and Sunday school when the latter moved to Lexington, Va.

Rev. James Smith was assigned to this church at the request of the congregation, by the Presbytery of Abingdon, June 1912. For several years services were conducted in Christ Episcopal church through the kindness of the officers of that church.

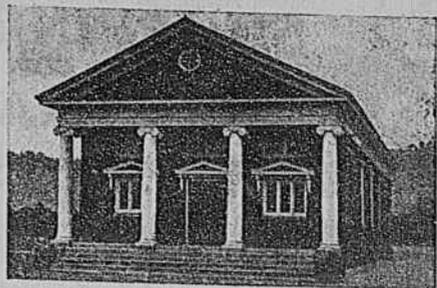
The present church building is the first one that the congregation erected. It was dedicated June 7, 1914. The manse was erected in 1910. The church conducts one Sunday school in the town church and one in the Big Spring church in Powell's Valley. Mr. W. J. Smith is the superintendent of the town school and Mr. A. R. Gordon is the superintendent of the Big Spring school. The church assists eight communities in maintaining preaching services at regular times. The church owns and operates three automobiles for Christian work exclusively. The church supports four native preachers in the Presbyterian Mission in the Belgian Congo, Africa.

The Woman's Auxiliary is taking an active part in the work of the church. It is well organized with three circles. Mrs. J. D. Rogers is president. Miss Kate Guthrie is the leader of the young people's work. She has oversight of five Christian Endeavor societies, teaches in two Sunday schools, has charge of the course in Bible Study in the Lewiscot Presbyterian school in Hoot Owl Hollow, and does relief work among the needy and sick throughout a large area in this section. The Christian Endeavor society is doing wonderful work. They meet in the church every Sunday evening. J. P. Wolfe, Jr., is president with forty-two members on roll.

The Appalachia church which was organized November 7, 1920, is at present grouped with the Big Stone Gap church, but has its own officers and organizations. Rev. Jas. Smith is the pastor, and Mr. W. R. Otey is the superintendent of the Sunday school.

Baptist Church

The Baptist church is proud of the fact that it was the pioneer church of the Gap. It was organized in 1890 with Rev. McManaway as pastor. The old church on East Third Street was sold about fifteen years ago and now the church has a handsome structure on Wood Ave. At the

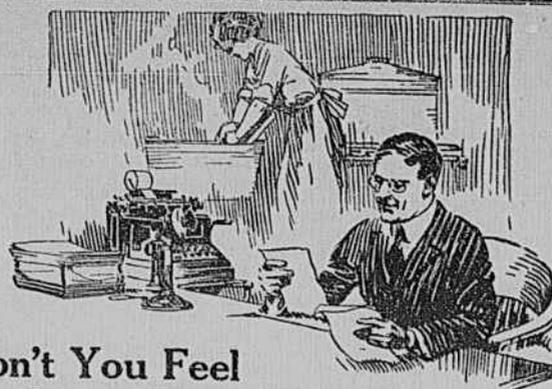


Presbyterian Church

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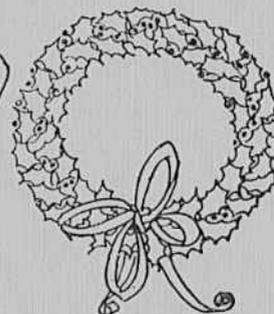
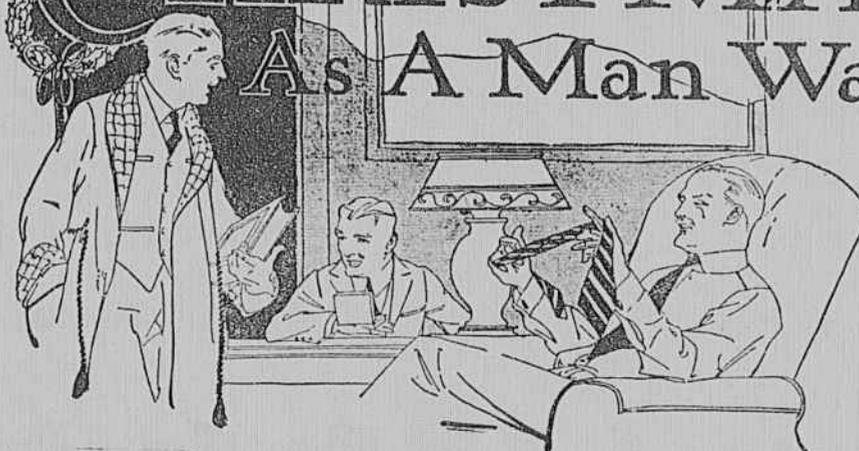
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