

Historic Sites
and Notes of Interest
Prepared by:
Steven P. Starling
City of Grayson Historian

Chestnut Grove Baptist Church- 2299 Rosebud Road. The oldest congregation in the City of Grayson. The church was organized under an arbor in 1850 by 5 prominent men of the area. That was eleven years before the unpleasantness between the Northern and Southern states. In 1852 two acres of land were bought for two dollars. The first meeting house was located in the middle of what is now the extensive cemetery. It was a log structure which also served as the areas first school named Evergreen, evergreen trees still stand in the middle of the cemetery. This log structure was used until 1873. For the first 100 years services were held once a month. The older white church sanctuary dates before the 1900's. Rev. J. P. McConnell was licensed to preach and later ordained at this church. He served as pastor of this church several different times. It was told by Rev. McConnell's granddaughter, Ponnice McConnell Moore about 1978 that this was the church where he also preached his last sermon. He couldn't muster the strength to finish his sermon standing up. He stated at some point that day that if he could not stand in the pulpit to give a sermon then that was the last he would preach.

Grayson United Methodist Church- 555 Grayson Pkwy. Fourteen charter members formed the beginning of Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church, South under a brush arbor in 1884 and by 1885 they had built a simple wooden Church Sanctuary on an acre given by Mary and Margeret Billue (aunts of Rev. J. P. McConnell), "for so long as the property be used for religious worship" at that time the church and land were valued at \$2000.00 dollars. At some point later a steeple with a bell was erected. The church's name was later changed to Grayson Methodist Church, then Grayson United Methodist Church.

In 1911 the church started on a "Charge or Circuit" system with several area Methodist Churches. Some of those churches were Snellville, Zoar, Loganville, and New Hope, with services being held at each of the churches about once a month. Sunday School was held every Sunday and was a vital part of church and community life. As churches on the charge grew and could pay a full time pastor, they withdrew from the charge. Grayson and New Hope were the last two churches on the charge into the early 1970's. Many student pastors from Candler School of Theology served these churches, several progressing into high leadership roles in the North Georgia Conference.

The original church sanctuary was moved back from the original location at the intersection of Rosebud Rd. and Grayson Parkway in the 1950's or early 1960's. Men and women of the church labored after work farming or other jobs to construct a basement to house a fellowship hall and Sunday school rooms. Then the church was placed on top of this new basement when the church was moved back from the road. The original Sanctuary that was a beloved landmark in the community was demolished about 2004. When the church bell was removed prior to demolition, it was discovered that it had been put in place in its original shipping crate. It now sits near where the original church once stood.

In 1983 a Christian Life Center was erected to the delight and hard work of members. Before the demolition of the original Sanctuary a beautiful new church was built in 1993. The present church campus has grown tremendously in the last several years with further buildings and programs.

Grayson First Baptist Church- 2142 Grayson-Lawrenceville Hwy. Although

the original 1913 Church Sanctuary has been gone for many years, the bell from that building sits now in front of the present Church. The first meeting to form a new Baptist Church in Grayson was held on March 1st 1913. On April 4th 1913 the church was organized by a group of local citizens and three ordained Baptist ministers. This church has always had a great emphasis on missions. The original Sanctuary was built and dedicated by July 20th 1913. On September 28th 1969 the present Sanctuary was dedicated. The church recorded 133 members as of August 1954. Many more have joined this thriving congregation since then and many wonderful additions and programs have been added since then. On May 5th 2013 the church held its 100th anniversary celebration.

Grayson Elementary School- 460 Grayson Parkway. Original site of Grayson High School. The original school was a 2 story wooden building that was built in 1900 by local lodge, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and local citizens. In 1913 a two story brick veneer school was built. First graduating class was 5 students in 1917. The land for Grayson School was given by Moses McConnell (brother of J. P. McConnell), “for so long as the land is used for educational purposes”.

The first “modern” school in the new town of Trip (Grayson) was Trippe Academy built in 1882. In 1923 the 2 story brick building and campus of Grayson High School was valued at \$20,000.00 dollars. It had eight rooms, four cloak rooms, 2 sets of encyclopaedias, 2 toilets (probably outdoor privies), eight teachers, eleven grades, 200 students, and listed with no world globe.

Although the original 2 story brick building has been torn down since the late 1950's, when it was consolidated into the new South Gwinnett High School in 1957. The original bell from the school sits on the lawn of the present school building. The bell was presented to the Grayson High School in 1913 by 9th District Congressman, Thomas M. Bell. The bell was bought by 25 Grayson citizens and was erected on the lawn of the Grayson Elementary School in the late 1960's by the Grayson Lions Club, and dedicated to the community.

After Grayson High School was consolidated with South Gwinnett High School the two story brick building was replaced with the brick building that serves as Grayson Elementary School today. Grayson has always been known for excellence in education. Many students from all over the county boarded in Grayson in the early years of the 20th century to attend Grayson High School because of its eleven grades and quality of education.

Grayson Elementary School's Rock Building- located behind the Grayson Elementary School's brick building. In 1930 the area schools were consolidated. Prior to that children of the close local communities were educated at small schools in their area. Some of these local community schools were Bay Creek, Roberts Academy, Harris Academy, Ozora, and Midway.

The Rock Building was built in 1942 of “Grayson granite” to house the lower grades as growth of the school increased. It was burned by arsonist in 1944. Many local citizens including Mr. Woodruff and W. J. Cooper started the rebuilding immediately with donated materials and labor. W. J. Cooper, Mayor of Grayson at the time and past member of Gwinnett County School Board, made sure classes were not interrupted long and they were held at local churches and anywhere large enough to accommodate them. W. J. Cooper died suddenly on February 14th 1946 and did not see the completion of the newly rebuilt building.

Chestnut Grove Baptist Church Cemetery-2299 Rosebud Road (on the

church campus). The cemetery is held by the church and donations from families and friends of those buried there help keep it in good repair. Many of the older graves are marked but many are unmarked. It is unclear if the cemetery predates the formation of the church. Many prominent and old families are buried in the cemetery. Many of the names you see on roads, schools, and neighborhoods can be found resting in this cemetery.

Grayson Arts and History Center - 2070 Rosebud Rd. It is also known as the Kennerly-Cox House. The home was built sometime between the late 1880's and 1890's and was originally owned by J. P. McConnell (who probably built it) until 1909. The town blacksmith and coffin maker, T. T. "Doc" Kennerly and his family lived there until 1938. The home has changed owners several times over the years. The Bramblett family lived in the home for several years until 1957 when the home was purchased by Doyle and Flora Kilgore Cox. Mr. Doyle Cox was killed in a tragic auto accident in 1968. "Mrs. Flora" lived in the home and was a beloved citizen, she was a sweet, quiet lady.

The City of Grayson bought the house in 2001. (See Grayson Arts and History Center on our web-site).

Farmers Barber Shop - On Grayson Arts and History Center grounds. If the walls of this simple little barber shop could talk, many tales would be retold, jokes cracked, and "problems of the world" solved. Mr. William Farmer built this barber shop in the front yard of his home after he sold his original shop to Janice Briscoe. It is a true Grayson "fixture" and landmark. The simple one room and one chair barber shop has hosted political figures and celebrities such as Lester Maddox and Don Knotts, among others. Mr. Farmer was one of Grayson School's best school bus drivers. When the barbershop was in front of his home, you knew not to go during his bus route times. If you saw the bus in his yard you could probably get a haircut. Mr. Farmer donated the shop to the Grayson Arts and History Center after he retired and was planning to move to a new home. After being moved it has become an asset to the Center. Mr. Farmer left the shop's interior as it had been during his career. He often comes to give haircuts on special occasions.

Yancey-Greene Home - 2112 Rosebud Rd. This home dates from the late 1880's to 1890's. Many families have lived in this home over the years, including the Langley family. Gordy Yancey owned this home until it was purchased by Hoyt and Bena Moon Greene in 1941. They moved to their new home in Grayson in a one horse wagon. Mr. Billy Greene and his sister Jean still live in the home. They are one of the few, maybe only native Main St. Grayson families still living in their original home.

The Cofer Home - 516 Grayson Pkwy. John J. Cofer and his wife Effie Brooks Cofer bought this home in 1928. The home was probably built by J. P. McConnell in the late 1880's or 1890's. In 1922 Mr. Cofer was elected Justice of the Peace. The Cofer's home has been the site of 100's of marriages. Mr. Cofer joined the Masonic Lodge in 1913. He went for 27 years without missing a meeting. John J. Cofer served Grayson in most civic capacities. After the Cofer's passed away, the house was rented for a couple of years then it became a Tea Room. After the Tea Room closed, Grayson House Restaurant opened as

Grayson's first "fine dining" restaurant with a wonderful reputation. The Cofer home is now home to The Graft Restaurant. They have made many eclectic changes to the home.

The H. T. Williams Home - 512 Grayson Pkwy.. Henry Thomas and Annie Biffle Williams lived in this home. Mr. Williams was the brother of William Pittman Williams and Reubin Williams who were also local Grayson residents, civic leaders, and civic leaders. Also, these three Williams brothers were members of the large Pittman Williams family of Snellville. The home was probably built in the late 1880's or 1890's, most likely by J. P. McConnell. Many structural changes have been made to this home over the years. In the 1970's the Carr family lived in this home and had the first swimming pool in Grayson. Greg Fisher has operated many of his business interests out of this home for several years.

Nix-Mason-Payne Home- 660 Rock Springs Rd. It was the Henry A. Nix "home place". Henry A. Nix was born in 1849 and died in 1924. This home dates among the earliest in Grayson, it was probably built around the 1870's. One of the children of Henry Nix was prominent Gwinnett citizen, Col. O. A. Nix who served in the Georgia House of Representatives and as a State Senator. The Wideman Mason family later purchased the home. Wideman Mason was a WWI veteran, civic leader, and farmer. He was still plowing his fields with his mule "Queen" until the early 1970's. Wideman Mason's wife, Maude Tanner Mason was known for her graham biscuits. The Payne family lovingly restored the home. Rev. Buddy Parish, who served Grayson First Baptist Church, and his family also lived in this home.

The Etheridge Home- 480 Grayson Pkwy. The Calvin and Beuna Brooks Etheridge lived in this home. Mr. Calvin Etheridge owned a mercantile store on Main Street. The Etheridges were very generous to Chestnut Grove Baptist Church, donating land and other gifts. The home was built around the 1900's. The Gwinnett County Board of Education now owns it. J.P. McConnell most likely built this home.

Janice's Beauty Shop- 408 Grayson Pkwy. Originally built by William Farmer in 1964 or 1965 as his barber shop. Mr. Farmer operated his barber shop for a couple of months. Mr. Farmer then sold it to Janice Mitchell Briscoe. Janice's Beauty Shop opened August 13, 1965, and is still in operation.

McConnell-Webb-Allen Home- 2057 Grayson-Lawrenceville Hwy. It was built by J. P. McConnell for his son Andrew "Uncle Buddy" McConnell in the mid to late 1890's. It is the foremost example of Victorian architecture left in Grayson today. The Andrew McConnell family moved from Grayson to the Stone Mountain area around 1909. Alexander and Cora Cooper Webb bought the property around 1910. After the death of Alexander Webb in 1941 and the death of Cora Cooper Webb in 1972 the home was rented several times. It was then purchased Steve and Patty Allen and family. They then sold the property around 2001. The home then housed as Noble Hall Gift Shop and now the Gwinnett School of Music. Most of the original doors, mouldings, mantels, and mill work are still intact. Unfortunately workman replaced the gazebo windows which used to be taller like the windows in the rest of the house. Alexander Webb was the son of Rev. Andrew J. Webb. Webb Ginn House Road is named that because it was the way farmers went to Rev.

Webb's cotton gin. There was not a Ginn family.

McConnell-Webb Rock Barn- Located behind the McConnell-Webb Home. This barn sat is located near where the L&L Railroad tracks were. The barn was a livery stable for livestock, chickens, and other animals. Mr. Webb would house the animals in the barn if the owners were not there to receive them. It is very close to where J. P. McConnell's store and home was, it could predate the building of the McConnell-Webb home.

Chupp-Britt Home- 2047 Grayson-Lawrenceville Hwy. This home was renovated to the Bungalow Style before most homes in Grayson. It has a beautiful stained glass window in front, to the left of the front door. The Langley family and others have lived in this home. Mrs. Alice Cooper Chupp lived in the home until she got older and had to go to a care home. She died in 1964. She was the sister of Cora Cooper Webb. The Baily sisters lived there until they were older then the house was rented several times again. The home is now houses the Law Office of Pamela Britt and other offices.

Batchelor-Bennet Home- 520 Grayson Pkwy. Sam Batchelor and his wife lived in this home in the early part of the 20th Century. The John and Floy Bennett family then lived in the home. The Troy Holcombe ,family, and the Omar Segers family also lived there in later years.

Fertilizer and Cotton Warehouse- 2014 Britt Street. This building was built in the 1890's and used as a fertilizer warehouse by Mr W. V.. Brownlee and also stored cotton. Thru the years it has housed many different uses, at one time a home improvement business and a coffin company. It is near where the passenger depot for the railroad was. It is the last building left in a once vital business section of Grayson. Grayson Cotton Gin was located across present intersection towards Grayson-Lawrenceville Hwy.

The Potato House Building- 426 Grayson Pkwy. In the 1890's or 1900's this building once housed the Williams Brothers Store. In the 1940's it was used as a curing and storing house for the Irish and sweet potatoes by local citizens. Mr. Lloyd Williams who was the Grayson High School agriculture teacher was in charge of this. Mr. Williams helped develop many projects for the young students of Grayson. This building is built of "Grayson Granite".

John J. Cofer's Store- 424 Grayson Pkwy. John J. Cofer and wife Effie operated a store here opened in 1913. The store had an ice cream fountain in it when he bought it. He had bottled Coca-Colas delivered by wagon from Lawrenceville. He mixed cokes, root beer, and cherry drinks which sold for .05 cents, vanilla ice cream was a favorite and you could get 2 scoops for .10 cents. Before WWI Mr. Cofer's brother, Robert operated a barber shop in the rear of the store. Mr. Cofer performed his first marriage as Justice of the Peace in front of the store in 1923. The couple were in a great hurry because they had run away to get married, so he sat on the edge of the car seat and they were married in the car. Mr. Cofer's

store stocked anything a small town mercantile store possibly could.

City Hall was housed in this building for many years then several other businesses have occupied the old store. It is also constructed of "Grayson Granite".

Hoyt Cown's Store-422 Grayson Pkwy. This brick building was once Rance Martin's service station, Byron Michell then operated a pool hall there. In later years it was Hoyt Cown's junk store.

Old Grayson Post Office- 420 Grayson Pkwy. The brick building was built in the 1960's by civic leader Mr. Tom Moore to be leased as the Grayson Post Office. In recent years it has housed several cafe's.

Bankston-Loveless Home-2172 Rosebud Rd. This home was the Bankston family house on a very nice farm. It was also lived in by the Jim Loveless family. The Cannon family lived there at one time also. The home dates to around the 1890's.

Gower-Swanson-Briscoe Home-579 Rock Springs Rd. The S. M. Gower family, then by Cordele and Josephine Swanson. In recent years it was the home of Rachael Briscoe. It is now occupied by James Norton. This home was most likely built in the 1880's or 1890's.