History of Cohutta Seventh-day Adventist Church

**(Written by: Mr.Coon in 2001)**

In 1960 some Adventists arrived through Southern Missionary College. These students had a Sunshine Band who became acquainted with Leona-Williams, one of the first families of Cohutta. Then in the fall of 1963 and in the spring of 1965 these students conducted evangelistic meetings in a tent east of Henderson's Feed Store.

The following year the Apison Church became involved when John Pierson (Sabbath School 'superintendent) became acquainted with Lee-Shugart (who owned a cotton-gin). Two years later in 1968 Betty Parks conducted a Vacation Bible School in the Presbyterian Church, whose pastor was Jack Walker. In 1969 and 1970 the Cohutta children were bussed to VBS, which was held in the Apison church.

The ingathering campaign of 1969 helped Adventists of Apison become acquainted with so many friendly people in Cohutta.

Loyd and Betty Kerbs also continued their follow-up work from VBS in Cohutta by distributing a magazine titled These Times. Loyd and Betty with others continued this program for several years, forming real friendships among the Cohutta community.

In 1977 Dwight Davis conducted 7 weeks of tent meetings on Red Clay Road. In the meantime, Lester Coon (pastor of the Apison church) purchased a house and 50 acres from John Shugart. Extensive repairs were made by Loyd Kerbs, his sons Curtis, Lonnie, Ed Beans, Bucky DeLong and Tom Jackson. In August the house was rented to Glenn and Marty Coon, who moved in with three of their four (Their oldest daughter had been married that same month) children.

Following the Davis meetings, Roy Wilson gave his life to the Lord and became an Adventist, who was head deacon of the Cohutta church for 15 years. A Sabbath School was formed using the Coon's home for their weekly meetings. Lester Coon came each Sabbath for the church service, and Glenn Coon conducted the weekly prayer meetings. Sabbath School song services were usually conducted by Larry Coon or Lonnie Kerbs.

In 1978 Rudy Skoretz conducted another tent series, which resulted in two more members - Luke and Robbie Lasson. William Carpenter, an associate pastor of Apison, began studies with Vesta Davis family. The studies were continued by the Kerbs and McDannel families. Daughter Cathy Davis then took the VOP (Voice of Prophecy) bible course, and attended Jere Webb's evangelistic meetings in Collegedale.

In June 1979, Cathy and Isabel (Roy's wife) were baptized and joined the Cohutta group that now had 45 prospective members.

The 45 who became charter members of the Cohutta Company, on January 20, 1979 – a list of the charter members is on displayed in the fellowship hall.

Of these original members, only four families still attend this church - The Tillotsons’s, the Kerb’s, the Coon’s and Cathy Stone. (The rest of her family came later)

The next year we welcomed our sixth member from the Cohutta community - Ann Stacy, who has helped with children’s Sabbath School ever since.

In August 1979 Harold Kuebler became the assistant pastor of Apison - in charge of the Cohutta Company. Pastor Kuebler held prayer meetings, and began a verse-by-verse study of Revelation, it was not uncommon to spend an entire meeting on one verse!

The Coon’s home held services with 60 people in attendance. In November pastor Kuebler challenged us to start plans for a church building.

Lester Coon made a arrangement with the Georgia-Cumberland Conference of Seventh-day Adventist to donate $20,000 towards a building for us. We discovered that we had $18,000 in the bank for this purpose. The Apison church donated the house and 50 acres to the Cohutta company, which sold the house to Glenn & Marty Coon for $50,000.

This made a total of $88,000 cash available for our new church building. We added to this amount, by means of an intensive letter-writing program by our church members, soliciting funds for specific items in the church building.

This amount - if realized- would raise our cash reserves to $174,000. (Not bad for a 33-member company of non-affluent people!) A copy of our letter can be seen on the display board in the fellowship hall.

In May 1980 a road was bulldozed up the hill, the foundation was laid, and Loyd Kerbs was put in charge of the building project. Among his helpers were his sons Curtis and Lonnie, Bill Twombley and three full-time volunteers: Ed Ley, Gary Herron and Tom Jackson.

Vernon Tillotson was the chairman of the planning committee. Using the building plans donated by a friend, our entire company became the building committee. The committee met together weekly to discuss the desired modifications to the plans. One thing was decided upon early, we wanted our church to look like the ‘Church in the Valley by the Wildwood’. The Maryville, TN. church and the Fellowship Church in Dalton Ga. were the closest thing to the outward design wanted.

The decorating committee included Betty Tillotson, Linda Williams, Betty Kerbs, Eula Fox, Judy Moots and Marty Coon. Robbie Lasson was thrilled with the whole idea, for it had been her dream for years to see a church up on the hill.

The stained-glass windows created by Arlyn Moots, electrical wiring was done by Larry Williams. Linda and Larry Williams traveled extensively to find just the right wall lamps for the sanctuary. Ed Ley ran a one-man jog-a-thon to raise money for the bell tower. During this time we negotiated a loan with the Businessmen’s Association for $200,000.00 to be paid over a period of 15 years at the rate of $1,500 per month. However that debt was paid off ahead of time and we have been mortgage-free for several years.

Finally all that remained was the installation of the pews, and they arrived at the very last minute - about one day before our opening service. We waited for everything to be completed before we had our opening service on May 30, 1981. The bulletin for that service is also displayed on the board in the fellowship hall.

May 31, 1981 (the very next day) our church was christened as a wedding chapel. Dorenda Kuebler (the pastor’s daughter) and Charles Mills were married. The wedding program is also in our display.

In July Strickers and in August Jeff Stone both became members. In September Larry Coon and Sarah were married in our church. Betty Tillotson, our church clerk, also became the Wedding coordinator for our church. In October Gail and Allene Clark joined. Gail became our church organist for over 15 years. In November Russell and Genevieve Williams joined.

At our opening service the sanctuary was packed, and with its beauty as a wedding chapel, it did not take long for our charter membership of 45 to increase to 170 members - a figure which remained constant for the next 20 years.

Although the clerk’s records show an accession of 609 (?) members during that time, we have had a large number of transient members. They are either college students who have graduated or families who have since moved away. Our church has experienced a high proportion of local people who have become either transients or what Harold Kuebler termed ‘pew-hoppers’.

Admiration for the challenge and the completion of our Church, Pastor Harold Kuebler and his wife Janet left us in 1981 to become the full-time pastor of the Apison Church. Pastor Andy McDonald (a young man fresh out of College) with his wife Vicki, served us from 1981 to 1983. During those years with Pastor McDonald, the Jones family and Pykes family, Bucky and Dolores DeLong all joined our church. Pastor McDonald’s new ideas became a period of growth for our community outreach programs. Our first pictorial directory was made as well as the first Cohutta Corn Feed. A huge tent was pitched in the middle of town and we had a health fair with great success. A community service center was set up in the middle of town. We started a newsletter for our church, which you can see posted on our display board in our fellowship hall.

With Pastor McDonald’s youth and enthusiasm, we gained an influx of young married couples. Pastor McDonald with his wife left in 1983 to the Orlando Hospital church where he has remained as pastor for the last 18 years. We were sad to see Pastor McDonald go. A sample of his humor and our first communications with him upon his arrival to his new church in Orlando, Fl. was this, “Now that I have TWO secretaries, I am so organized you wouldn’t believe it!”

When Pastor McDonald left us, we wanted to make sure that the next pastor was the one God wanted us to have, so there was much prayer and communication with the Conference leaders. We were allowed to choose our next pastor and we unanimously chose Les Speer (some of that communication is on the display board) during his pastorate, Earl and Edna DeLong, Pauline Mitchell and Ruth Austin joined our church.

Bob and Ruthie came in 1985, it was under the same conditions. We chose them. During his pastorate Gayle Holweger joined. Here is here today with the quartet, and we are so happy that after leaving us to help start a new group in Chatsworth, he has rejoined the Cohutta church.

This brief history of the first ten years of the Cohutta company, reveals that of our current group six have been members at Cohutta for 22 years, two for 21 years, four for 20 years, three for 19 years, four for 18 years, two for 17 years, one for 16 years, one for 15 years and one for 14 years, (total of 24). The rest of our 170 (?) members have joined during the twelve years that Jim Cox was our pastor.

An important note regarding the Cohutta church. When Luke Lasson died, he donated his property to our church. It is due to his gift that we are able to have our beautiful fellowship hall.

Two families (who have since moved away) had a great deal in obtaining the fund, and with the planning of the fellow ship hall building. They are both with us today so we would like to give special thanks to the Jones’s and the Petry’s. We also thank all others who helped in that planning and making the fellowship hall.