

ST. DAVID' S-IN-THE-VALLEY

Cullowhee, North Carolina

(The principal researcher of this family history was Katherine Hanson Cox Cook of Youngtown, Arizona, granddaughter of Thomas Augustus Cox and Cora Kate Davies.)

St. David's-in-the-Valley stands, surrounded by evergreens of various kinds, white pines, hemlocks and holly trees. The trees have grown from seeds deposited by the birds and discarded Christmas trees of other years.

In the winter, St. David's-in-the-Valley looks like an old Christmas card. We see the little Church with its Gothic-style windows and tall spire, standing among the evergreens, the white snow on their branches.

The life of St. David's-in-the-Valley, in Cullowhee, North Carolina, and that of Judge Daniel David Davies were irrevocably intertwined when Judge Davies was baptized in St. David's Church at Llanllawddog, Dyfed, Wales, March 24, 1826, although that fact was not realized at that time. His was the original conception of the Church, the moving force for the building of the Church and he and his friend, Hamilton Brown, donated the land upon which the Church was finally erected.

St. David's-in-the-Valley, as St. David's Episcopal Church is known, stands on a hillside in Cullowhee, North Carolina. It faces the Speedwell Road and is just down the hill and "down the road" from the house at Forest Hill, the home of the late Judge Daniel David Davies and his family and of Thomas Augustus Cox, son-in-law of Judge Davies, and his family.

The Church was erected in 1885, on the site which has a lovely view of the Cullowhee Valley and the farm at Forest Hill. The view is now partially blocked by the football field of Western Carolina University. Judge Davies lies at rest within the morning shadow of the Church, with other members of his family. St. David's has survived, although it has had many problems over its 100-year history. (This year, 1984, is the 100th Anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of the Church).

The Church was heated, in the old days, with a wood stove and the organ was one of the old pump variety. All of this combined to make the little Church a unique house of worship with its own special atmosphere.

For some of the older people in the Valley and in various parts of the United States, the name "St. David's" brings to mind memories of such respected names as Davies, Cox, Brown, Madison and Morgan, whose individual and families' histories are linked with that of the little Church.

Although St. David's history really began in Wales, where Judge Davies was born January 31, 1826, its name goes back even farther into the annals of history. David, patron saint of

Wales, was a Sixth Century Bishop and Abbot of a monastery which he had established in a lovely little valley on South Wales' westernmost tip, now St. David's Head. It was soon after his death that St. David's grave became a shrine and offerings from the devout pilgrims to his grave were enough to finance, in the 12th Century, the building of a great cathedral on the site. According to tradition, it is said that the Pope stated two pilgrimages to St. David's were equal in merit to one pilgrimage to Rome. However, St. David's was not destined to remain Roman Catholic, and when King Henry VIII broke with the Church in Rome, it was inevitable that St. David's Cathedral would become a part of the Church of England.

Daniel David Davies, born January 31, 1826, in Carmarthenshire (now the County of Dyfed), was named for the Welsh patron saint. On March 24, 1826, he was baptized in the little parish church of St. David's in Llanllawddog, a few miles north of the City of Carmarthen and about 50 miles east of the Cathedral city of St. David's. Thus, the life of Daniel David Davies and the life of St. David's-in-the-Valley, in North Carolina, began to become intertwined.

Daniel David Davies left Wales and traveled to England to learn mining and then to America, where he worked at various jobs and in various places, making a success of all he attempted. He finally settled in Cullowhee, North Carolina in 1856, met and married Katharine Elizabeth Sensabaugh, of Haywood County, and built Forest Hill as a home for his family.

In the late 1870's, Judge Davies recalled a promise made on his behalf, when baptized as an infant in the little Church in Llanllawddog, and he requested the Reverend Dr. David Buel of Asheville, to visit his home at Forest Hill.

In 1879 or 1880, Dr. Buel had held Jackson County's first Episcopal service in the little schoolhouse in Speedwell. Apparently, that service aroused considerable interest in the community because in 1881, Bishop Theodore B. Lyman, of Raleigh, accompanied by Dr. Buel, paid his first visit to Cullowhee, where he stayed overnight at Forest Hill. On a third visit, in 1883, Bishop Lyman spent several days visiting members of the community and inspecting different sites for the location of an Episcopal Church in Cullowhee. He chose a three-acre plot overlooking the Valley, which plot happened to be owned, in part, by the Davies family and the rest owned by Mr. and Mrs. R. Hamilton Brown. These two families deeded the property to the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina on July 23, 1884. The original subscription list for the Church, which is still a part of the Church records, shows that Judge Davies pledged \$100.00 (that being a considerable sum of money in those days) toward the construction of the Church and lesser amounts being pledged by Hamilton Brown and David Rogers. The cornerstone for St. David's was laid on December 22, 1884, by Reverend Dr. Buel.

Upon recommendation of the architect, a structure of brick and mortar arose on the site instead of the little simple wooden structure which Judge Davies had envisioned. This brick and mortar church was the first construction of its kind (brick and mortar) in this area.

The honor of naming the little Church was given to Judge Davies and years later, he would recall that the Church had been named St. David's in remembrance of the old cathedral in Wales. The Church was close enough to completion by August of 1885 that Bishop Lyman and Dr. Buel were able to hold the very first service in the building. When Judge Davies and his three oldest daughters, Ella May, Carrie Sue and Cora Kate, were presented to Bishop Lyman for confirmation, Judge Davies, was, at last, able to carry out the vows and pledges made for him at the time of his baptism.

At this time, however, St. David's ran out of that most-needed commodity, money, and the architect returned to New York. However, fortunately, Thomas Augustus Cox arrived in the Valley. He was a civil engineer from Greenville, South Carolina and he brought his mother and sisters to Cullowhee for health reasons.

The marriage, on October 27, 1887, of Thomas Augustus Cox and Cora Kate Davies was the first wedding ceremony ever performed in the little Church.

St. David's-in--the-Valley was finally completed during the summer of 1892 and was consecrated by Bishop Lyman on August 18, 1892. By this date, the handmade brick had been covered with white stucco, the natural cherry woodwork was finished and the handmade cherrywood pews were in place and ready to seat 100 or more worshipers. Not all of the congregation would be Episcopalians; many were Methodists and Baptists who had helped to build the Church. The actual membership of the Church remained small, and there were never enough in the congregation to warrant the services of a full time priest. Upon occasion, the little Church would have to call upon Grace Church, in Waynesville, to provide a lay reader for Morning Prayer on Sundays. The lay reader most often at St. David's for the service on Sunday was A. Rufus Morgan, a high school student in Waynesville, who was considering studying for the ministry. Since he had no other transportation to Cullowhee from Waynesville, he would walk across the mountains on Saturday, unless he was fortunate enough to "hitch a ride" along the way. After the service, he would return to Waynesville, "shanks' mare". Dr. Morgan was ordained into the ministry in 1913 and later on in his life, he would play another role in the survival of the little Church, St. David' s-in-the--Valley.

Judge Davies died, March 30, 1920, just two months after his 94th birthday. He left his son-in-law, Thomas Augustus Cox, responsible for the well-being of St. David's. However, the communicants gradually died or moved away. In 1922, there were only eight communicants, and in 1925, there were only three left. Mr. Cox, as lay reader-in-charge, made an appeal to the Diocese of North Carolina for some financial aid so the little Church could attend to the spiritual needs of the students at the then Cullowhee Normal School, but there was no money available for so small a Church.

In 1952, the building was deconsecrated and all of the furnishings were removed. Some of the older members of the community, who had attended Sunday School in the little Church, kept up the cemetery adjoining the Church where Judge Davies and members of his family and the Cox family are buried, weeded and cleaned. Soon, however, the little Church, so lovingly and hopefully erected by the community of Cullowhee and the late Judge Davies, fell into disrepair with broken windows and a bare interior, becoming a “lovers’ lane” for the younger members of the community and the college.

It was at this point in time that Dr. Rufus Morgan again entered the picture and the fate of the little Church on the Speedwell Road. He felt that the Church should be reactivated and restored as a center for the growing Episcopal population of the College, and it was he who brought the Church of St. David’s-in-the-Valley to the attention of the Episcopal Churchwomen of the United States. He requested that they donate \$10,000.00 to help renovate and restore St. David’s-in-the-Valley and he received the money! The gift of \$10,000.00 went a long way toward the renovation and restoration of the Church and the addition of a Parish Hall. The opening of St. David’s as a student center, in 1959, was the result of the hard work and generosity on the part of the local Episcopalians and the many members of the Davies and Cox families all over the United States.

Dr. Morgan had kept a list of the original furnishings and those churches to which they had been sent; therefore, it was a fairly easy matter to collect the necessary furnishings and fixtures and restore them to the now newly renovated and restored Church. Among these restored furnishings were, the old pump organ (which had been electrified in the interim), the marble baptismal font, the cherrywood pews, the brass candlesticks, the silver communion vessels, the altar, the pulpit, etc.

The altar had been removed by Dorcas Adams Middleton, the daughter of Allen Adams, Thomas A. Cox’s head tenant farmer and friend throughout all his life. Dorcas was born on “The Glen” farm which Allen had helped Thomas A. Cox to build. Dorcas removed the altar to her farm to protect it from desecration during the period of deconsecration and returned it to St. David’s in 1959, when St. David’s was being restored.

The local Episcopalians, especially, the families of Paul Tuttrup and Creighton Sossomon, and a number of the College students, scraped, sanded, varnished, painted and polished until the little Church of St. David’s-in-the-Valley again shone like new.

In 1962, St. David’s became an organized mission church once again and the congregation has continued to grow, with The Reverend John Rivers becoming the priest-in-charge as St. David’s full time minister.

When the home Thomas Augustus Cox had built for his bride, Cora Kate Davies, “The Glen”, burned to the ground in October of 1919, the communion silver, chalice, paten, etc., for

the altar of St. David's was completely destroyed. Thereafter, it was necessary for the priest, whoever he was, coming to St. David's periodically, to celebrate communion, to bring with him each time, a borrowed chalice, paten and ciborium and the cruets of the Communion Service.

The altar cross, organ, etc., which had been removed and distributed to other Episcopal churches of the Diocese, were all returned, including the original pews. However, the totally destroyed Communion Service items could not be returned. By mutual agreement, the seven children of Thomas Augustus Cox and Cora Kate Davies Cox gave the Communion Service items to St. David's Church in 1959, in time to be used at the re-consecration services, which were attended by Thomas A. Cox, Jr., and his wife, Elsie, and David Davies Cox and his wife, Nina. The communion items are as follows: (1) the chalice and paten.(silver) are engraved: "In memory of Thomas Augustus Cox and Cora Davies Cox, by their children." (2) the ciborium (silver bread box) and two silver mounted crystal cruets, are engraved: "In memory of Mary Elizabeth Cox, by her nephews and nieces.

During the Communion Service of the Episcopal Church, the chalice and paten, of course, are upon the altar. The ciborium and cruets are filled as necessary before the service and placed upon the credence table by the altar, where the celebrant uses them to consecrate the wine and bread before placing in the chalice and on the paten. The other religious fixtures of the Church were donated originally as follows: the lovely marble font is dedicated in memory of St. John Cox, beloved son of Hannah Julia Skinner Cox and was presented to the Church by her. Miss Annie H. Cox, sister of Thomas Augustus Cox, Sr., gave and bequeathed an amount of money to procure an excellent bell for the belfry. The bell was molded and placed in the belfry to her loving memory.

Buried next to the Church, in the little cemetery, are Judge Davies, his daughter, Otelia, his daughter, Cora Kate Davies Cox, her husband, Thomas Augustus Cox, Sr., their youngest child, Benjamin Davies Cox, who lived only a few days after birth, Mary Elizabeth Cox, sister of Thomas A. Cox, Sr., and others of the families who were the first communicants of the little Church. On the corner of the Church wall, facing the cemetery is a plaque, "In Memory of St. John Cox 1890-1961 and Nora Cater Cox, 1894- 1980", placed there by the children of St. John Cox.

With few exceptions, the congregation is now composed of relatively young college families or college students. There also is Canterbury House, a combination student center-parish house-church school addition, where the students can hold meetings, study or relax over a cup of coffee. The dream of Judge Davies is again becoming a reality and the little Church in the Cullowhee Valley is once more an active part of the Episcopal Diocese.

Many of the family will remember, as your researcher does, Sunday services at St. David's, when Grandfather pumped the organ for Aunt Mary to play for the services, and the

voices of that small, friendly congregation were raised in song. Visits to Forest Hill are among the happiest of our childhood memories, I am sure.

There are several large scrapbooks on the history of St. David's and Judge Davies which have been kept at St. David's. Following this narrative of St. David's-in-the-Valley, will be found copies of letters, freight bills and other papers pertaining to the first organ purchased and installed in St. David's by Judge Davies. These papers make an interesting side note to the story of the little Church named for the Cathedral in Carmarthenshire, Wales. Also following are photocopies of newspaper articles pertaining to St. David's restoration and the replacement of the 70 year old organ.

Members of the Cox family will be interested to know that Dr. A. Rufus Morgan was the priest and celebrant at the funerals of Thomas Augustus Cox, Sr., in 1945; Mary Elizabeth Cox, in 1946 and Cora Davies Cox, in 1958, at St. David's.