

## The Buckingham Baptist Church

The Buckingham Baptist Church is located on Route 15 approximately 8 miles north of Dillwyn, Virginia. The church has been in existence since 1771 when Captain John Flood donated a portion of his land for its construction.

Local church members reminisced about their early days playing in the nearby creek and finding old hand-made red bricks. According to local legend, the red bricks were made in England and were used as ships ballast during the return voyage to Virginia after delivering their cargo of Virginia grown tobacco.

It is quite possible that Captain John Flood was a merchant sea captain and not commissioned in the Royal Navy as commonly thought. Local residents told us that the colonial Floods were farmers and tobacco growers. It would not be out of the realm of possibilities that John Flood transported the ship's ballast back to his home in Buckingham County after his delivery of tobacco in England.

These same red bricks are said to have been used in the foundation construction of the Buckingham Baptist Church and can easily be seen there today. Mr. Richard Toney, member of the church, showed us one of the hand made English bricks along with a shake shingle, which preceded the slate roof of the church. Inside the church sanctuary, to the left of the pulpit on the wall is a small bronze plaque, approximately 12"X18" commemorating the service to the church and the burial of Captain John Flood and his "wife". No mention which of his two wives is buried beside him. Several of the church members were extremely pleased to meet us and tell their stories of why the Floods were buried under the church. One woman suggested that John and his wife were buried there to prevent the local Indians from digging up the bodies for their scalps. Another stated that she heard from her grand parents that they were buried there after the Indians killed them. Both stories are interesting, but not very likely. The fact is probably that the Flood's are under the church because of the necessity to build an addition along the north wall. It was probably easier to build over the graves that disinter the remains and rebury them somewhere else.

Speaking with another church member, he related that as a child he had crawled under the church and later up into the attic. He stated that both the floor joists and roof rafters were hand hewn, mortised and tenoned and held in place with wooden pegs. No nails were used during the construction except for securing the shake shingles and wood siding to the walls.

We walked the church graveyard after the morning service and although the Buckingham Baptist Church was built on land donated by the Flood family, no Flood grave markers were found. Most of the gravestones were dated around the time of the Civil War and later.



The church is located on the eastern side of highway 15 just south of New Canton, Virginia. Highway 15 runs parallel to a railroad right of way. The county is forested with pine trees and beautiful rolling green hills. A vast majority of what was once Flood farmland is now owned by WESVACO, a Virginia lumber company. There is several wood processing facilities scattered throughout the area, which is evident, by the lumber laden railroad cars along highway 15. Whatever remnants of the first Flood farm once existed, they are forever gone. The Buckingham Baptist Church is the only point of reference to the once sprawling Flood farms.

### **The Flood Cemetery in Vera, Virginia**

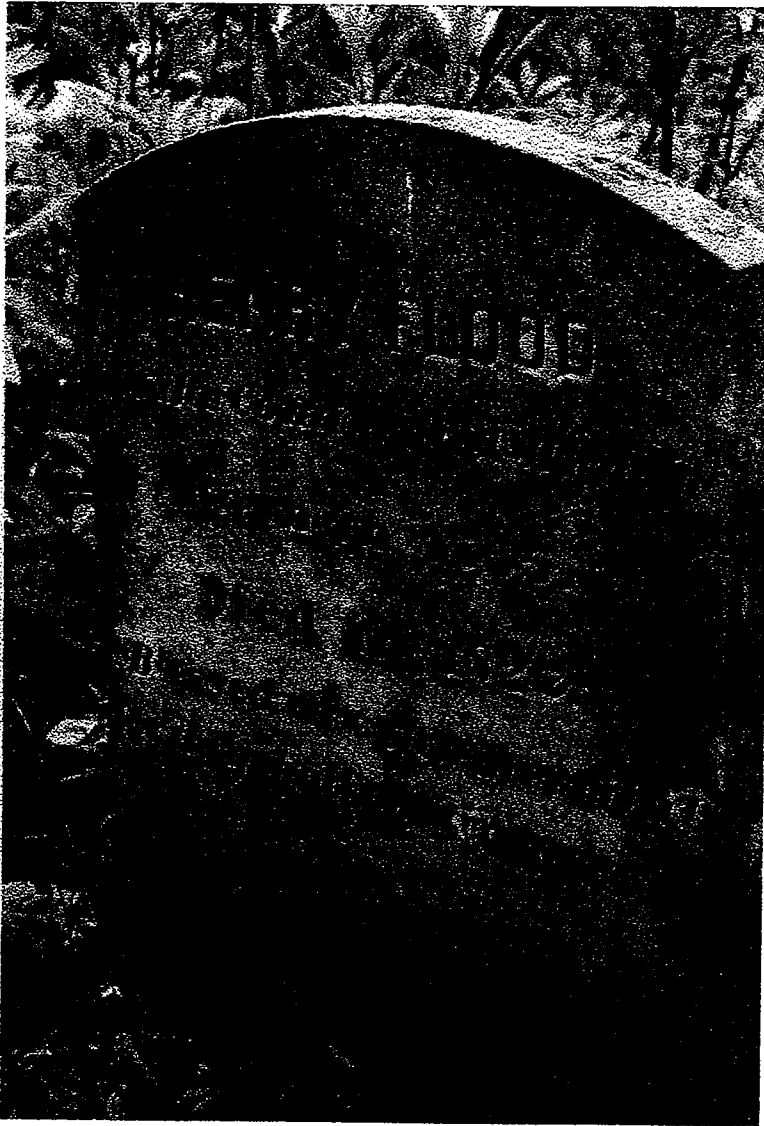
Heading back southwest on Highway 15 and then onto Highway 24 toward Appomattox, is the small hamlet of Vera, Virginia. It is here that Captain John Flood's sons most likely moved sometime after the Revolutionary War. Evidence of the new Flood homestead in Vera is overwhelming.

With the assistance of two wonderful local historians, Jimmy and Betty Drinkard, I was able to locate through dense pine forest the Flood family cemetery. Located approximately ½ mile west of Highway 24 on an old logging road were drove in Mr. Drinkard's 4 wheel drive Chevy truck. It was somewhat difficult locating what once was the Flood family road to the graveyard. Driving under a canopy of pine, we came to a clearing in the forest and the sky opened up into sunshine. Located in the clearing was a four-foot high wall made from those same hand-made red bricks. The graveyard was approximately 100 feet square and ringed entirely by red brick. On one wall, approximately center point was a hand forged iron gate, which opened into the last resting place for more than twenty Flood family members. Surprisingly, the majority of the head and foot stones were in excellent repair.

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With the efforts of the Drinkards and a bush ax, we were able to document all the graves having headstones. She made notes for the Appomattox County Historical Society files and I photographed each gravestone.

We located five graves, which had no markers, but were clearly gravesites. They were most likely some of the oldest and first to be buried there. They were located in one corner of the graveyard and farthest from the entry gate. The Flood remains that were buried there will forever remain a silent mystery. Nothing is left but a deep depression in the earth to signify a burial long ago.



The oldest known graves are that of Henry Flood (1755-1827) and his wife Mary Walker Flood (1754-1828). Henry's stone proclaims him to have been a Soldier in the Continental Army. Although he and Mary were buried there over nearly 175 years ago, the stones are in an excellent state. Also of note are the graves of Major Joel Walker Flood, CSA and two of his three wives, Ella W. Faulkner (1844-1885) and Jennie G. Pleasant (1838-1889). A complete listing of the graveyard is attached as an addendum.

### **“Old Home” or “Pleasant Retreat”**

After discovering the Flood family graves, the next obvious question would be where is the old Flood house. It was known then as it is today as “Old Home”. Because of the thick forest on the farm, it was necessary to retrace our route and enter the farm from the highway. Through an enormous field of wheat and just inside the tree line, a large two-story structure could barely be seen in the dark forest shadows. We drove part way to the house and had to walk the remaining 150 yards.

At first glance, you might almost miss the house in the shadows. It was necessary for us to chop our way to the home due to the thickness of the brush. Trees, vines and poison oak choke the sunlight from the house. But once under the pine needle canopy, I was in awe of its size. It must have been majestic. Jimmy told me that each of the red bricks was made on site, by the hands of Flood slaves. Facing the once front door, you can see that the left exterior brick wall has collapsed due to a large tree falling on the house years ago. Looking into the house from the gapping hole, I could clearly see the huge hand hewn timbers supporting the structure. The second story parlor with its plaster walls and elegant wood moldings were victim to years of weather and neglect. The wood construction was mortised and tennon and secured by wooden pegs. Attached to the main house was the wood sided summer kitchen. Aside from the damaged south wall, the structure was surprisingly complete.

Old Home, as the Flood family called it for nearly two centuries, is all but gone. Nothing short of a miracle will save her now. William Flood left from here as a Captain in the War of 1812 to protect Norfolk from the British. Major Joel Walker Flood, CSA, graciously offered Old Home to General James Longstreet as his headquarters during the last days of the War of Southern Rebellion. The General accepted the offer. Old Home is adjacent to the Appomattox National Battlefield Park. Union forces swept through the Flood farm during the last battles of the war. In the Virginia State Records at the Appomattox Public Library, I found the following passage regarding the last days of the Civil War. “The morning of April 9 found the majority of Lee’s army spread along the Richmond-Lynchburg Stage Road (Route 24 or Hal Flood Highway today) over a distance of four miles. His vanguard was posted just west of the village limits; his rearguard was entrenched four miles northeast at New Hope Baptist Church (present-day Vera, Virginia). Between those two points the Confederates spent the night of the 8<sup>th</sup> on the lands of John Sweeney, Allen Conner, James Bryant and Joel Flood, Jr. Flood’s home, “Pleasant Retreat”, serving as General Longstreet’s headquarters that evening”<sup>1</sup>.

If you travel just a mile and a half to the west, and enter the National Park Service’s Appomattox Battlefield Monument, you will find an exact duplicate of Old Home in that of the Cloverleaf Tavern on the park grounds. It stands directly to the north of the Appomattox Courthouse building.

The property and farm on which Old Home is presently decaying belong to the wife of the late Judge Joel West Flood. Dorothy Flood and her son, Hal Flood owns the property today.

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia State Records of Appomattox

## Eldon

Traveling west toward the town of Appomattox, nearly at the intersection of Highway 26 and 460, is the former Flood plantation, Eldon. Turning right off Highway 26 and up the gravel road and through the wrought iron and brick entry gates, sits Eldon. Her size is the first thing you notice about this magnificent home. Three stories tall, five dormers on the roof and a front porch supported by four beautiful white Tuscan pillars. Its occupant, U.S. Congressman Hal Flood, remodeled Eldon in the early 1900's. It stands in a grove of Linden trees. The interior is paneled oak and each mantelpiece of the eight fireplaces is beautifully carved. Eldon is breathtaking.

Eldon was built around 1825 by the Christian family. There is a legend that the Flood family actually lived in the stone cottage on the Eldon grounds prior to the building of the main house. Standing just west of the main house, the cottage served later as the kitchen. Its white-painted stonewalls are nearly twenty-two inches thick and have wide stone chimneys on either end. Doctor Joel Walker Flood purchased Eldon from the Christian family approximately 1840. Doctor Flood and his wife, Eliza Bolling West Flood, lived previously at "Old Home" adjacent to the Surrender Grounds at Appomattox Courthouse. Dr. Flood and his wife had one child, Henry Delaware Flood who was born on August 14, 1816. When young Henry was graduated from the University of Virginia, Dr. Flood gave Eldon to him along with 1,500 acres of prime Virginia farmland. This land included an 800-acre tract known then as "Rocky Farm", (now Eldon) on Buck Creek and 700 acres on the Slate River. By marriage and purchases over the years, the estate grew until it became a plantation of over 3,000 acres.

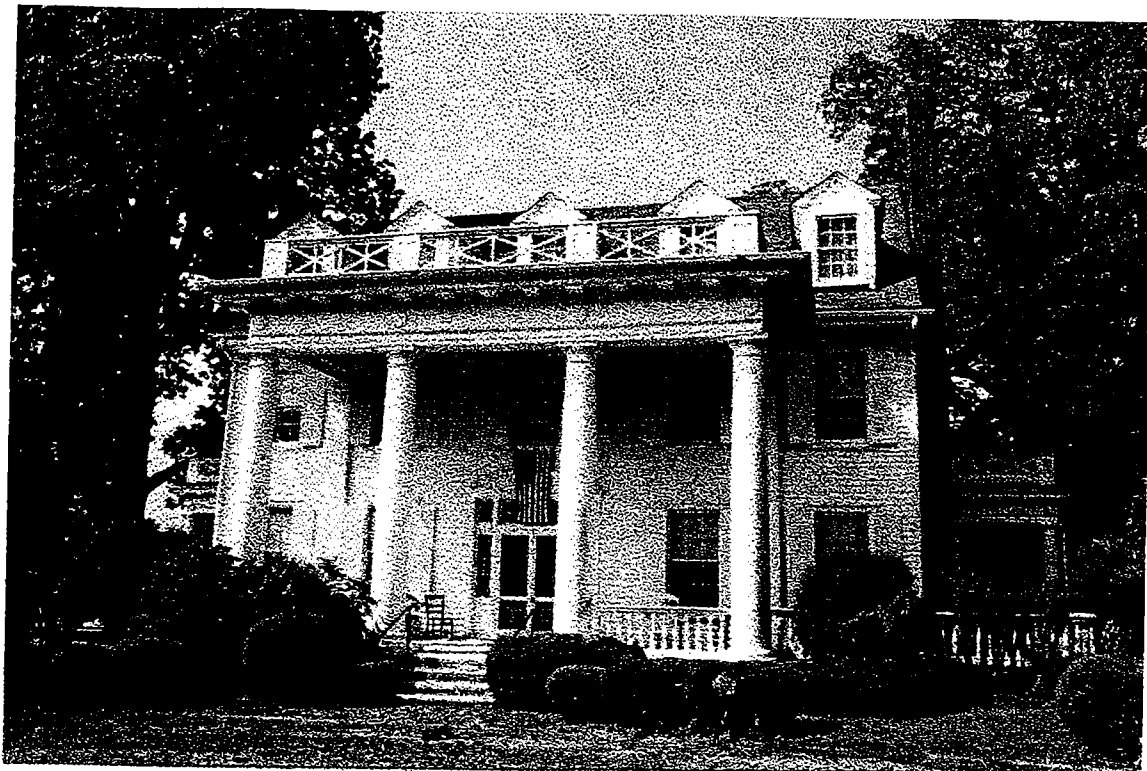
Young Henry became quite prominent in then Buckingham County. Henry was a Colonel in the Virginia Militia as well as local politician. Young Henry married Mary Elizabeth Trent on Valentines Day 1838. Mary was the daughter of Captain Thomas and Martha D. Trent of nearby "Rural View" in then Buckingham County. Together, Henry and Mary had one child, Joel Walker Flood, born January 9, 1839 at the Trent's "Rural View". The infant Joel was raised at "Old Home" by his paternal grandparents when his mother died only 18 days after his birth.

According to the Flood's farm manager, Edward Holmes Smith from 1907 to 1938, "Eldon was one of the finest and best-run farms in the State of Virginia. The Flood's were pioneers in agricultural practices, which are now universally used and recognized. The Flood's worked our crop rotation, which improved their land. They knew the value of legumes; had large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle; and raised goodly numbers of horses, mules and hogs. The principal money crop was dark fired tobacco. Many people took part in Eldon's life and it was a much loved place".

It was here that a young United States Congressman, Henry Delaware Flood, or Hal as he was known, left for Washington, DC in 1901. Hal Flood spent 20 years in Congress but returned home to Eldon over the many years of his service to the Nation. Hal and Anna

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Portner Flood's son, Bolling Byrd Flood was born in one of the second floor bedrooms at Eldon in 1916.



Today, Eldon's future is in doubt. Her most recent inhabitant and owner, Mrs. Virginia Tyler, recently passed away. At the time of our visit, her executor and attorney, Mr. Robert Carter, was both gracious and understanding and allowed us to "explore" Eldon unsupervised. Eldon's fate is unknown. Mrs. Tyler had no will and as far as I know, her property, including this magnificent building, may be sold to developers. It would be a tragic event should Eldon be lost forever. I feel the Flood family members and lovers of history must find a way to preserve this valuable piece of family history as well as local Virginian history.