

Restoration of Inman Chapel

My husband Bob Barnett and I retired in 1997 and came to Haywood County as part-time residents. Bob had worked for IBM in software development and management for 30 years and then began working as a CPA in New York State. I retired after 30 years of teaching, first in Florida and then in New York. We lived in my old home place off Lake Logan Road, and began helping my brother with the Inman reunion held in August each year.

We soon realized that Inman Chapel built in 1902 by my great grandfather was on the point of collapsing. A few family members in every generation had made repairs and improvements at the chapel. My father and my brother and many other family members had kept the chapel open for weddings, funerals and reunions. What became clear was that we needed a person with fund raising, project management, and engineering skills who was able and willing to do the actual work, if necessary, to take on the project. In 2006, the board of trustees appointed Bob and Phyllis Barnett as chairpersons of the Restoration Committee.

Fund raising and publicity were on going challenges. Names and addresses from reunion records were used and letters to extended family and friends were written. We asked for financial support and for volunteers to help complete the actual work. There were few volunteers in the first year, but as work progressed and progress could be seen more people became involved.

Community members donated concrete, scaffolding, rain gutters, stonework, and more. Charles and Katherine Frazier made a contribution and offered to match what we raised. Charles's involvement in the actual work and the publicity from his book *Cold Mountain* were a big boost for family and community volunteers. Bethel Rural Community Organization's Inman Chapel tours and support were also helpful with fund raising and for encouraging volunteers. Barbeque dinners, quilt raffles, and name plaques for benches and windows were used to raise money. Bob and Phyllis donated the new light fixtures. Cheryl Haney and Phyllis Barnett donated proceeds from book sales.



The complexity of the project revealed itself in stages. We knew initially we had a bat infestation in the attic and that we would need to remove the dropped ceiling and the paneling which had been added in the 1950's. What Bob discovered was damage to the roof structure that meant we needed to replace the entire roof and metal shingles which were very costly. Bob did research to find replacement metal shingles to match the ones that were removed. Then he hired a local contractor to do the work. In the process of cleaning the attic and removing additions, we uncovered the original chestnut paneling put in by James Anderson Inman.

We were unable to save the blue ceiling because of damage from the bats, but my sister Cheryl and I had fun painting each new board light blue.

My brother Ted Darrell and Bob discovered termites in the front sill which had to be repaired and replaced. My nephew Ted and volunteers added a new concrete deck with a handicap ramp. Volunteers built a new wooden deck at the back door. The electrical system was replaced in the building and Bob and David Reece installed new ceiling lights. The picnic shed was repaired and extended and the windows broken by the lawn mower kicking up gravel were replaced.

Efforts by family and community raised a lot of money, but it was not enough alone to complete the job. Different groups of volunteers were there at different times doing essential work. Bob Barnett's project management skills, his time commitment, and his willingness to do whatever was necessary were essential in completing the restoration at Inman Chapel.

The restoration of Inman Chapel begun in 2006 and completed in 2008 was the latest in an ongoing family effort to pay respect to James Anderson Inman and his Universalist beliefs. Inman Chapel survives today as a testament to the spirit of family and community that is central to our mountain culture.

A more extensive coverage of the restoration is found in the Epilogue in the book **At the Foot of Cold Mountain Sunburst and the Universalists at Inman Chapel** by Phyllis Barnett which is available at Blue Ridge Books in Waynesville.



David Reese helping Bob install new light fixtures.



Darrell Inman, Carol Simmons and Bob



Painting Volunteers: Turville and Kitty Inman, Phyllis, Mary Ann Inman and Charles Frazier



Phyllis cleaning basement which was added in 1950's



Bob doing restoration in 2007



Phyllis with early donors from UU Church in Black Mountain