

## The Church That Moved

Do you believe in a personal God Who is actively involved in the affairs of mankind? Do you think He will intervene in human events to see that His will is accomplished? The answer to both questions, for believers, is obvious. Otherwise, why pray?

A few mornings ago, I heard a story on a Cleveland radio station that illustrates that truth. It is an account excerpted from Paul Harvey's book, entitled *More of Paul Harvey's Rest of the Story*, published in 1980 by Bantam Books. Here it is:

There are only two possible explanations for what you are about to read. It was either the most phenomenal coincidence that ever occurred -- or it was an act of God. Literally.

And remember, as you learn what happened on that rainy Thursday afternoon a hundred summers ago, that a stack of sworn statements and legal documents say that it was so.

There was just one problem with Swan Quarter, North Carolina. It was a lowland, so naturally the choicest real estate was on the highest ground. In the event of a heavy rain, the closer you were to sea level, the harder you were hit.

A little more than a hundred years ago, the Methodists of Swan Quarter had no church, and the only lot available on which to build one was a plot of low-lying property on Oyster Creek Road.

It was far from an ideal location, but they had acquired the land and construction began.

The church was to be white frame, small but sturdy, propped up on brick pilings. In 1876, the building was completed, and on Sunday, September 16, a joyous dedication ceremony was celebrated.

That was Sunday, September 16.

Three days later, on Wednesday, a terrible storm lashed Swan Quarter. All day, the wind howled and the rain came down in a gray wall of water.

By nightfall, devastation.

Much of the town was flooded; many roofs were ripped from homes by the cyclonic turbulence. The storm raged on all through the night and into the bleak morning.

By Thursday afternoon, the wind subsided, the rain all but stopped. For the first time in more than a day, there was an almost eerie calm. One by one, the citizens of Swan Quarter threw back the shutters and peered from what was left of their homes.

Most saw only a desolate waterscape, a community ravaged by nature. But those within sight of Oyster Creek Road beheld the most incredible sight they had ever seen.

The church -- the Swan Quarter Methodist Church, the whole building, intact -- was floating down the street! The floodwaters had gently lifted the entire structure from the brick pilings on which it had rested and had sent it off, slowly, silently, down Oyster Creek Road.

Within minutes, several concerned townsfolk were sloshing about in the street, waist-deep, fighting the rushing current, trying desperately to reach the still-moving church so that they could moor it with lengths of rope.

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The ropes were fastened, but the effort was in vain. There was no stable structure secure enough to restrain the floating chapel.

And as the building passed by, more attention was attracted, more aid was enlisted. To no avail. The church moved on.

By now the building had made it to the center of town, still on Oyster Creek Road. Then as dozens, amazed, helpless, watched, the Swan Quarter Methodist Church, still floating, made a sharp, inexplicable right turn and continued down that road, as though the chapel were alive, as though it had a mind of its own.

For two more blocks, the townspeople fought the ropes to hold it back, unsuccessfully. And then, in the same decisive manner with which it had moved, the church veered off the road, headed for the center of a vacant lot ... and there ... stopped.

While the floodwater receded, the church remained -- and is there to this day.

Over a hundred Septembers have passed since the little white frame church removed itself to the most desirable property in Swan Quarter.

In the process of making up your own mind as to how and why what happened happened, you ought to know this one thing more, the rest of the story.

The choice highland lot where the chapel settled was the first choice of the town Methodists for the site of their church. And the shrewd, prosperous landowner whose property it was originally turned them down.

But the next morning after the flood -- after discovering the church in the middle of his lot -- that same landowner went to the Methodist minister and, with trembling hands, presented him with the deed.

What a powerful story, told by Paul Harvey. You may call the relocation of the church building a coincidence if you choose. I believe God placed that church where He wanted it to be.

--Beecher Hunter