



R-16 Johnson Spring (Prayer Garden) Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly
Ridgecrest, N.C.

Artist's conception of Johnson Spring Prayer Garden



Left: Actual picture of Johnson Spring Prayer Garden

Right: Some enlargement of Prayer Garden area



Early Morning Service at Johnson Prayer Garden.

Johnson Spring

The story of how Johnson Spring was found and developed as a place of worship comes from Rev. J. Jeter Johnson.

Near the close of a beautiful day in August, 1922, a little lad was walking with his father as they followed a mountain trail just across the road from the present Springdale cottages. There was dense undergrowth all around, and as he stepped slightly off the trail into a hole of water, leaves, and roots, the boy exclaimed rather excitedly, "Daddy, there is water here. It must be a spring.

Let's come down here in the morning and see if the water is good."

They did return the next day, and with the necessary tools cleared out the undergrowth, roots, and other debris until a clear crystal stream was bubbling from its hidden source in the earth. With all the ingenuity and resourcefulness of a ten-year-old boy, an improvised dam was built so that the water could be accumulated and made available for drinking purposes. A larger area was cleared in order to make the spring accessible. The boy was charmed as father and son worked together on their new-found treasure. During the morning he said to his father: "Let's cut away some more brush and make some seats of poles, so when people hear of the spring and come here for water, they can sit down and rest and talk." Was he dreaming dreams and seeing visions?



Sign at entrance to Johnson Spring Prayer Garden

At the end of the summer season this lad and his family returned to their home in Camden, South Carolina. He would not be privileged to visit the spring again. Tragedy struck the little country schoolhouse the next spring, and he with many others was lost in a fire. His father, Rev. J. Jeter Johnson, now a resident of Ridgecrest, and others of the family have continued to give almost perpetual care to the place so dear to the heart of the lad. It has been beautified and is one of the choice spots on the Assembly grounds for prayer and meditation. Large and small groups gather in the dew-laden atmosphere at morning watch and worship with the "hidden" music of marimba and violin, or mixed quartet, the birds adding a note to the melody and the devotional speaker directing their thoughts Godward. "Johnson Spring," named for William Jeter Johnson by an Assembly manager, should always be a reminder of a little lad who loved nature and God.

(Source: "A Dream Come True" by R.L. Middleton, Convention Press, 1957)



Johnson Spring Prayer Garden has been, for reasons not clear (one has to wonder if an endowment was involved), re-named the “T.W. Wilson Memorial Prayer Garden” (T.W. Wilson was an associate of Billy Graham, who lives close by in Montreat, N.C.). In a nod to William Jeter Johnson, (but with a misunderstanding of the Johnson surname,) another conference hall (“Johnson Spring”) now carries the “Johnson” namesake.

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