RAY'S CHAPEL has been a guiding light for the small rural community of Eastville in Oconee County for more than a century. People of the surrounding community have gathered here in the chapel for the spiritual uplift that comes from the dynamic preaching of God's Holy Word.

Way back in the 1840's, Mr. "Billy" Ray felt the need and the necessity of having a place of worship, a place for everyone to congregate for fellowship with God and fellowship with one another. He not only felt the need but did something about it. He very generously gave three acres of his land to be used as a place for building a "Meeting House" and a tract to be used as a place for "burying the dead."

The people also felt the need of a Meeting House where they could come and worship God on the Sabbath. Soon everyone had the vision of a "Chapel" and it wasn't very long until a magnificent log church had been erected by the members of the community. Surely, this was one of the greatest steps that had been undertaken in the community. This Meeting House served a dual purpose in the lives of the people, however. On Sunday morning one could look in all four directions and expect to see many mules and wagons heading in the direction of the church. It would usually take them all day to go to and from the church to home each Sabbath. Uncle Bill would see Cousin Jim and find out how Aunt Susie or Grandma Sal were getting along since last they met and in this way families were
reunited for one happy moment.

The Reverend John W. Knight served as first pastor in 1844-45, as far as recorded history relates. Since the early days there have been some thirty-six preachers who have served the church and community.

Perhaps one of the greatest events of the Meeting House era was the annual "Homecoming" traditionally held on the Fourth Sunday in July which earmarked the beginning of the famous Protracted Meeting, or, to put it in modern terms, Revival. On this Day of all Days everyone in the community was expected to be present. Also, everyone who had once lived resided in the community was expected to come back to the old Meeting House and meet old friends and loved ones. Yes, this was a glorious event in the history of little Ray's Chapel. There were preaching services, testimonials, great moments of prayer and, of course, many hours of singing — soul-stirring and heart-warming singing. After this eventful "best yet" day, and for two weeks following, the evangelist would preach and teach and call sinners to repentance. There would be much crying and rejoicing around the altar, or "mourners' bench", when someone, under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, repented of his evil ways and humbly sought forgiveness of his sins, and came away a new creature in Christ Jesus.

The Church has always been on a three or four church charge, thereby never permitting it to have services twice every Sabbath. Due to this fact the community has somewhat suffered from a lack of spiritual bread necessary for a wholesome Christian life. To supply for the deficiencies of preaching services, the Sunday School has been a very vital part of the spiritual life of the Church. From our earliest records we found that the Church has had an active Sunday School since 1850 when there were thirty active members, three teachers and a Superintendent. The Sunday School today is about the same size as the records show the first Sunday School to be. This can be accounted for by the fact that the community has not grown in population in the past century but has actually decreased. With the coming of modern
farming methods there has been a decreasing demand for people to cultivate the land in the surrounding area, therefore many people have migrated to the cities or other communities which have diversified interests.

The present structure was erected by the members of the community in the year of 1903 after a cyclone had completely demolished the log building in the month of February. An interesting incident happened during this storm. Everything from the floor upwards was loosened by the wind and scattered all over the woods around the church except a small table which was left standing in the very place it had always stood near the pulpit. On this table were some important papers which were also left intact and unharmed. Thus showing the omnipotent power of God.

During the past several years the entire Church has been completely renovated inside and out. Modern lighting is a part of this renovation. A sign bearing the name of the Church has also been placed in the front of the building. Plans for the future include placing Highway markers directing travelers and visitors to the Church.

The present Pastor is the Reverend Marion H. Conway whose grandfather, Rev. C.A. Conway, preceded him in the Pastorate of the charge during the conference years of 1888 and 1889.

Ray's Chapel is now keeping pace with her mother churches in the city in meeting her obligations and in her contributions to the special projects and appeals she is asked to meet. Truly, Ray's can be called the "Guiding Light" of the Eastville Community and she can be expected to carry the banner high as she strives to reach the lost and unchurched in the future.

Submitted by: James Calvin Wortham