

**TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS**

**In the Life of**

**J. A. COPELAND**



**“He Being Dead Yet Speaketh”  
Jairus A. Copeland  
1881-1955**

TRIALS  
AND  
TRIUMPHS  
In the Life of  
J. A. Copeland

By

LAWRENCE H. ROBERTS, Ph.D.

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LAWRENCE H. ROBERTS  
Route 4, Box 17-G  
Magnolia, Arkansas 71753

# *Dedication*

*Dedicated to  
the memory of a daughter of J. A. Copeland,  
the late Willie Copeland Roberts Billingsley,  
the author's mother.*

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## Preface

This book has several purposes: (1) It depicts a way of life in a rural area which lives in the memory of fewer and fewer people today. Perhaps this book can make some of those memories more permanent. (2) The Copeland family, their relatives, and friends will find in this book a permanent record of some important family history. (3) For those who are interested in Church history, there are some names and incidents which may be of interest. (4) Most important, this book portrays the life of a man who was triumphant over all of life's trials and difficulties through his religious faith. Such a life inspires all of us to strive to attain the "abundant life."

Fate bestowed upon me an unusual privilege: to be a member of the "Copeland Clan." My mother was one of the daughters of J. A. Copeland. Fate was also good to me in that the Great Depression drove my parents back to the country where they grew up, where their parents grew up, in Pike County, Arkansas. My boyhood days, therefore, were spent playing along the same branches and in the same fields where my grandfather played as a child. Some of my earliest memories are of the good times I had visiting my cousins, the Cox family, who lived in the very house where my grandfather lived when he was a boy.

Perhaps those early experiences caused me to be interested in family history. Whatever the reason, some

## PREFACE

years ago I became interested in genealogy and spent a great deal of time searching for information about my ancestors. Later, I decided to write this biography about my grandfather. My only regret is that I did not do it earlier—before my mother died in 1971.

I wish to express my gratitude to the many people who helped in gathering the information contained in this book. Especially, I thank the sons and daughters of J. A. Copeland, my own uncles and aunts. I know that you all understand that much more information was collected than can be used. The many details which you provided helped me understand the complete picture more fully. I have done the best I can to make sure the facts are correct. Please be charitable when you find errors; I can assure you that the errors are not the result of neglect, but in spite of careful attention!

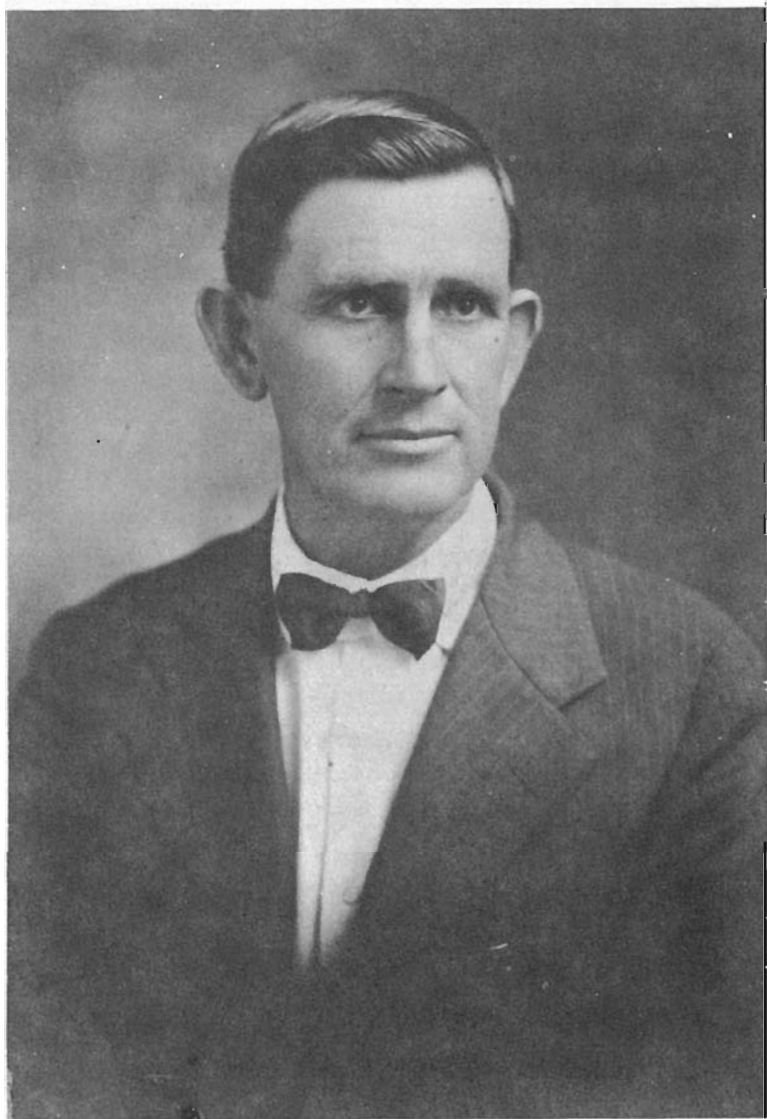
Special thanks go to Bill and Neva (Chesshir) Handy for their invaluable assistance in critiquing the manuscript. Bill's keen logic and analytical skill, and Neva's perceptive analysis of the language and style of writing greatly improved the finished manuscript.

And, I want to express my appreciation to my wife, Cora, for her assistance, and especially for her patience, during the time this book was being written.

— Lawrence H. Roberts.

# Table of Contents

Preface .....	5
I "HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH" .....	9
II ANCESTRY AND CHILDHOOD .....	15
III MARRIAGE AND EARLY YEARS .....	43
IV IN SCHOOL AT CENTER POINT .....	59
V THE COUNTRY PREACHER .....	67
VI LIFE AT PLEASANT HOME .....	83
VII THE FAMILY CIRCLE BROKEN .....	97
VIII DELIGHT AND TRAGEDY .....	107
IX THE GOSPEL LIGHT .....	119
X THE MINISTRY CHANGES .....	139
XI AT HOME BUT NOT IDLE .....	145
XII DECLINING HEALTH .....	155
XIII THE BILLSTOWN REUNION: HONOR TO WHOM HONOR .....	161
XIV THE SILVER CORD IS LOOSED .....	171
XV THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH .....	183
Appendix: Chronology of Important Events .....	189



J. A. Copeland  
Age 38

## CHAPTER I

# “He Being Dead Yet Speaketh”

The brevity of life is stated emphatically in the Bible: “For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” (James 4:14). The family of J. A. Copeland remember with sweet sorrow a moment when, with his loved ones gathered around him, he said, “It’s not how long we live, but *how* we live that matters.” All will agree! It is the quality of life that really counts. The voice from heaven came to the Apostle John saying, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.” (Rev. 14:13). The inspired writer said of Abel, the Old Testament character, “. . . he being dead yet speaketh.”

J. A. Copeland lived upon the earth only seventy-four years, seven months, and one day, a “little time” compared to the thousands of years of recorded history. The quality of his life, however, was such that his works do follow him; his influence lives on. He lives in the memory of many people as one of the most Christ-like persons known to them. After his death, many letters were received by members of his family and by the *Gospel Light*, letters which expressed sympathy for the family and admiration for the man, J. A. Copeland. The following are excerpts from some of those letters:

. . . I have known him for thirty years, and never one time heard any man say one disrespectful word about him or his work. His work was always done in the greatest sincerity. His preaching and teaching was sane, sound, and sensible. If he—or others who lived as he did—should miss heaven, none will be saved, for he was truly a man of God. May the family be comforted daily with the memory of his devoted life, and not weep as others who have no hope . . .

—Rue Porter.

Although it was not my privilege to be closely associated with him in his ministry, I have felt a very sincere appreciation for his love for the Lord and for the Kingdom and for his solid good judgment. . . . His influence will live not only among those who are closely associated with him, but among a host of others who will be influenced, who will be affected by his Christian life, Christian family, and teaching of the gospel.

—M. Norvel Young.

Although I knew Brother Copeland less than three years, I came to love and highly respect him "for his work's sake." His name had already become legendary among God's people in southern Arkansas when we moved here. . . . The full effect of his godly influence will never be determined until we reach eternity. Yes, he is gone, but he will forever live in the hearts of those who were blessed with his acquaintance.

—Jimmy Allen.

Milton Peebles has been a close friend of the Copeland family for many years. After the death of J. A. Copeland, he wrote the following, which was published in the *Gospel Light* in January, 1956:

For a number of years it has been a privilege of mine to be closely associated with the life and work of Brother J. A. Copeland. His preaching has been primarily in the rural areas and oftentimes he has supported his family by farming while preaching the gospel. Perhaps no one will know until judgment the sacrifices that he and his companion have made to go and preach. They never told it. Only judgment will reveal the good that has been done. Hundreds attended the funeral to mourn and to express their sympathy to the family. It was, no doubt, the largest gathering of its kind that I ever witnessed. These,

however, were only a fractional part of the thousands whose lives he has touched and influenced over fifty-two years laboring in the Master's vineyard.

Brother Copeland was a strong man in the faith. He had a wonderful knowledge of the word of God and the wisdom to understand it and assist others in understanding it. His manner was plain, but firm. He did not make any show of his ability; yet there was never any doubt but that he was able to meet the situation at hand. Simplicity of preaching and living characterized his life. Even his death came to pass in this simple manner. He went to sleep and slipped away.

Through the years it was necessary for him to take stands against error and for the truth that were not popular at the time; however, this quiet, but resolute spirit of his has been invaluable to the strength and purity of the church in Arkansas. His strength and courage have made our efforts to preach the gospel easier and opportunities greater. On the day of the funeral the multitude that gathered at the home and the meeting house made it somewhat difficult at times for the family in their grief. Yet at the same time it was a tremendous source of comfort to them to know that so many people from so many places loved him that much. Occasionally there is a man in this life that all who know him very well look upon him as a member of their family. Such a man was Brother Copeland. Hundreds passed the casket that day, and I feel assured that many grieved as if a loved one of their own had departed this life. I did.

Brother Copeland's great work can be attributed in part to his humility, his love of the truth and of the Lord, his knowledge of the scripture, his wisdom and understanding, his great personality, his perseverance and hard work, his fine countenance, his undying courage. May we ever strive to imitate him as he endeavored to imitate the Lord Jesus!

Truly he fought a good fight, he finished his course, he kept the faith and has gone to feast on the "splendors immortal" with the redeemed of the ages.

Much credit of this useful and beautiful life rightfully belongs to Sister Copeland—his companion for more than fifty years. May the Lord bless this fine family as they continue to preach, teach and live after the example which he set for them! How happy I am to have had such a godly man to encourage me! He has been a tower of strength in my life and in the church of our Lord.

—Milton Peebles.

Further evidence of the enduring influence of the life and memory of Brother J. A. Copeland was found by this writer seventeen years after Brother Copeland's death. Several people wrote letters when they learned that this book was being planned. Mrs. C. A. Greer, of Vicksburg, Mississippi, wrote, ". . . the memory of him will always be in my mind." Mrs. Clay Colvin, of Dubach, Louisiana, wrote, ". . . he was a great man, one of the best gospel preachers I ever heard. . . . We found Sister Copeland just as sweet and good as he. Clay and I are eighty-two and eighty-four years old, but we never forgot Brother Copeland's preaching." From Massena, New York, came a letter from John W. Buster, who wrote, ". . . He was loved and respected by all who knew him."

Why was J. A. Copeland so loved and respected? What was there about this man that created good will everywhere he went? How was he able to avoid making enemies, considering the firm stand he took on important issues? How was he able to live so triumphantly in the face of so many hardships? The answers to these questions can be found in the statement made by the Apostle Paul in Second Corinthians 3:18:

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

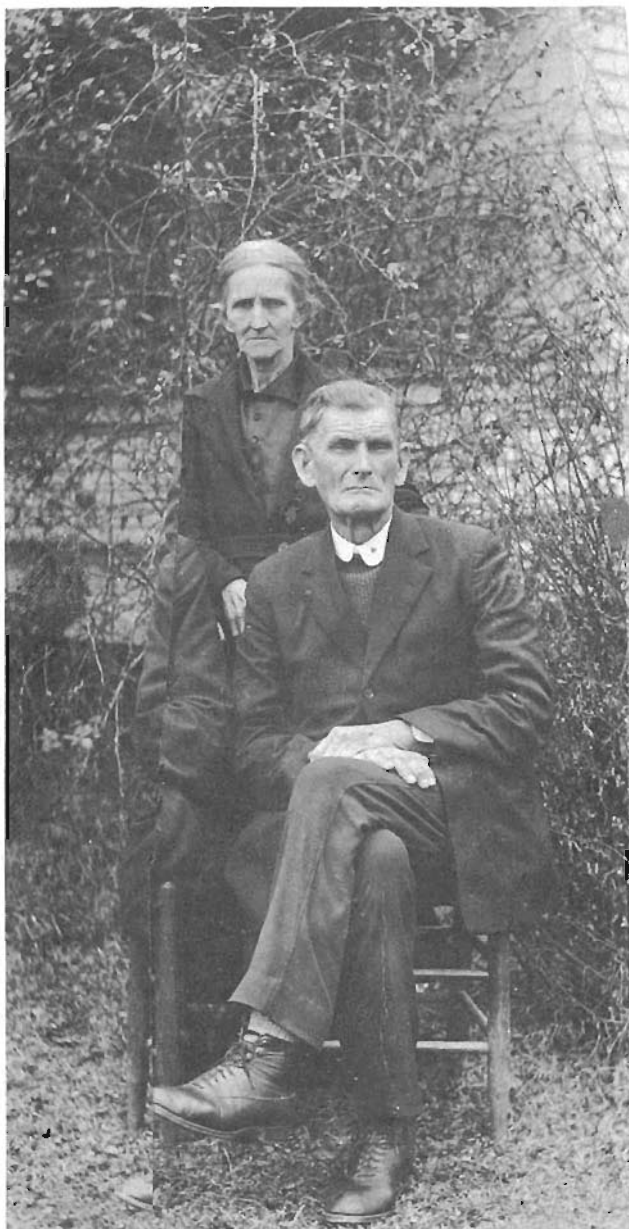
The life of J. A. Copeland reflected the Spirit of Christ. Reflecting is the inevitable result of beholding. It is a law of life that we become like those we constantly look upon, mentally. Brother Copeland, with "open face," that is, without veil of prejudice or unbelief, beheld the glory of the Lord, and reflected His image, His moral glory.

This book was written to complete the "photography of God" in the life of J. A. Copeland. The Holy Spirit "developed" Brother Copeland while he lived. The story



of that life, contained in this book, provides the "time exposure" needed to "focus" the "image of Christ" reflected by Brother Copeland's life. In this way, it is hoped, Christ's image may be transferred to the sensitive film of the reader's mind, there to be reflected again.

Brother Copeland was an humble man; he would not have approved of a book about himself written to reflect his own glory. If, however, the story can be told to bring honor and glory to Christ, and to inspire others to live for Christ, it will be in harmony with the purposes for which Brother Copeland lived. This is the author's purpose in writing this book.



James D. Copeland and Nancy (Womack) Copeland  
About 1919

## CHAPTER II

# Ancestry and Childhood

The westward movement of the pioneers in America followed a number of distinct trails, or patterns. One of these patterns of movement was from the Carolinas to Tennessee, to Southwest Arkansas, to East Texas and/or West Texas. Of course there were many variations of this pattern, but a study of genealogy reveals that a number of families followed this pattern across the continent, across the years.

J. A. (Jady) Copeland's ancestors were among the families which moved from South Carolina to middle Tennessee, to Southwest Arkansas. They were from the cultural group generally described as the rugged, pioneer farm folk who lived close to nature, working hard to make their living from the soil. Strict moral and ethical standards were instilled in them from childhood. Although a few individuals in each generation rejected these values, most of Jady's ancestors lived, to the best of their ability, according to the basic teachings of the Christian religion.

Understanding the kind of person Jady was requires that we consider his background and ancestry, among other factors. We shall, therefore, go back to his great-grandparents.

John Copeland was born in South Carolina in 1793, of Scotch-Irish descent. On June 29, 1812, at the age of 19, he joined the South Carolina Volunteers. He served as a private in the Company commanded by Captain John McNeil in the Regiment commanded by Colonel Rutledge from June 29, 1812, to October 30, 1812. He had volunteered for a six months period of duty, but was honorably discharged early, at Hadrels Point, S. C.

That same year, John married Sarah Massey, who was also born in South Carolina, in 1789. They had been married about thirteen years and had several children when they settled in Middle Tennessee, near Fayetteville. In 1825, when the last state lands in Tennessee went on sale for \$1.25 per acre, John and Sarah Copeland homesteaded land in Lincoln County, northeast of the county seat. In December 1850 and in May 1855, John filed bounty land claims based upon his military service during the War of 1812. He was awarded 80 acres in 1851 and another 80 acres in 1856. Later in his life, John Copeland owned 250 acres of land in Moore County, which was originally a part of Lincoln County.

John and Sarah Copeland had ten children. Either three or four of them were born in South Carolina, the others in Tennessee. Why did they leave their home for a strange land? Why did so many people in those years leave the Carolinas to face the uncertainties of the wilderness trail to find places to build new homes?

The economy of South Carolina was declining during the decade from 1820 to 1830. The new, fertile lands which were opening up in the Southwest provided great quantities of cotton, which beat down the price of this crop. The South had produced 160 million pounds of cotton in 1820; by 1830 the annual output had grown to 350 million pounds. The price naturally went down. So, South Carolina saw her profits dwindle, since she could not compete with the richness of the newly opened lands in Alabama and Mississippi.

A major factor contributing to the increased westward movement was the Land Law of 1820, which reduced the size of the tract of land that an individual might buy to 80 acres, and fixed the price at \$1.25 per acre. For \$100 a man could become the owner of his own farm.

By 1830, Middle Tennessee had become the most thickly populated area west of the Allegheny Mountains and south of Kentucky. In Middle Tennessee the hills were low, the valleys wide, and pioneer farm patches could grow as fast as the forest could be cleared. Because of the topography, Middle Tennessee was especially suited for the wheat boom which came in the early 1800's. However, overproduction caused the market to collapse, and Tennessee was never able to regain its early lead as a wheat-growing region. Specialized farming developed in Middle Tennessee. Later, many farmers began raising tobacco and fruit; others turned to stock raising, dairying on the blue grass pasture lands, or to truck farming.

What kind of country did John and Sarah find in Middle Tennessee? S. B. Reese\* describes it this way: "It was hilly country, nearly all of it, covered with the finest poplar timber ever grown in any place, standing thick all over the hill-sides, from two to three feet through and as long as they grow anywhere. Also, Chestnut and Beech trees grew up the valleys, sufficient to fatten their hogs most every year. The land, while fresh, was rich with blue grass growing everywhere, volunteer. Cold spring water ran out of most every hollow. Most everybody built close to some spring. It was model stock country in those days. No better corn or clover ever grew anywhere. It was also fine for wheat, but up to this time the only mode of harvesting wheat was the old reap hook, a one-hand machine shaped similar to a new moon, which was slow and hard."

\* *Corinth Arkansas And Its Kinfolks*, (Mimeograph).

By the time John Copeland was 32 or 33 years old, they were settled in Lincoln County, Tennessee. All told, they had ten children. The oldest was Richard Todd Copeland, born in South Carolina, in 1815. The other nine, not necessarily in order of age, were Sarah, George, Massey, John, Nicholas, William, Elizabeth, Mary, and Matilda.

During the last 35 years of his life, John Copeland was a preacher for the Primitive Baptist Church. He began preaching when he was about 37 years old, in Tennessee. Richard Todd married about that time.

Sarah died in 1857, when John was 64 years old. The next year he married Ruth A. Watson. They had two children: Charles, born in 1859, and Frances.

John died in Lincoln County, Tennessee, on February 24, 1865, and Ruth, his second wife, died about 1871. John and Sarah (Massey) Copeland are buried in a family cemetery on what is known as the old Smith place, about ten miles from Lynchburg in Moore County about one mile from the Oak Grove church building. The cemetery is probably located on the Bounty Land Claim farm of John Copeland.

### *Richard Todd Copeland*

Richard Todd Copeland, Jady's grandfather, was the oldest of ten children born to John and Sarah (Massey) Copeland. Richard was born on George Washington's birthday, February 22, 1815, in South Carolina. If George Washington had not died 16 years earlier, he would have been 83 years old the day Richard was born. That same month, ten days before, Abraham Lincoln had celebrated his sixth birthday.

At the time Richard was born, the War of 1812 was over; General Andrew Jackson had won the battle of New Orleans a month earlier. The Star Spangled Banner

was less than a year old. James Madison was President of the United States. At that time, there were no railroads, and no telegraph, but Fulton's steamboat was being talked about everywhere. Eli Whitney had invented his cotton gin twelve years before, so cotton was fast becoming the most important crop in the South.

Richard Copeland spent his early childhood years in South Carolina; he was approximately ten years old when his family moved westward to settle in Lincoln County, Tennessee. About twenty-five years later Richard, with his own family, moved west again to settle in Arkansas in 1849. Thus, Richard's lifetime spanned three-quarters of a century and three of the states in the Carolina-Tennessee-Arkansas-Texas migration trail mentioned earlier.

Richard was twenty-one years old when he was enrolled on June 18, 1836, in Lincoln County, Tennessee, by Captain Peter Tipps for a six-months period with the Mounted Tennessee Volunteers. He served during the Seminole Indian uprising, as a private in Captain Tipps' company of the First Regiment, First Brigade of Volunteer Mounted Militia, commanded by Colonel A. B. Bradford and Brigadier General R. Armstrong. His company was ordered into the service of the United States by Governor Newton Cannon from the first day of July, 1836, to the first day of January, 1837. Richard continued in actual service only two and one-half months; he was furloughed home on or about the 17th day of September, 1836, because of sickness. The following is a copy of the discharge certificate in the Archives file on Richard T. Copeland:

**TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

Know ye, that Richard T. Copeland, the bearer hereof, was a private of Captain Peter Tipps' Company of the First Regiment of General Armstrong's Brigade of Mounted Tennessee Volunteers, during a late six months' tour, in the United States service, and that, having served faithfully, he is hereby HONORABLY discharged.

New Orleans, 14th January 1837.

R. ARMSTRONG  
Brigadier General  
Tennessee Volunteers

When Richard was approximately 22 years old, in 1837, he married Sarah McClure. She was the daughter of William McClure, who was a neighbor of John Copeland. The McClures, too, were born in South Carolina, and were probably among the group of migrants who came to Middle Tennessee when John and Sarah Copeland came.

Sarah McClure was born January 1, 1817. Thus, she was about 20 years old when she and Richard were married. They lived on a farm near their parents. Their first child, Mary Jane, was born on October 21, 1838. Six of their eleven children were born in Tennessee, before they moved to Arkansas: Mary Jane, born October 21, 1838; Thomas M., born June 14, 1840; John, born December 12, 1841; Frances, born January 20, 1844; Martha E., born April 5, 1846; and William Cullen, born February 19, 1848.

In 1849, Richard Copeland and his family joined several other families who were moving to the southwest. Many families were leaving Middle Tennessee to find new lands, especially in Texas. The military roads in Arkansas had been built by the Federal government to move the Indians to the West. The gold rush to California was on, and the route across Arkansas was a good one for people from Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Southwest Arkansas was in the direct line between



Tennessee and Texas. The trail to Texas passed through or near the community where the folk from Middle Tennessee settled. Old Washington, in Hempstead County, was only twenty miles south of Corinth.

Two families, one Jones and the other Reese, left Middle Tennessee in 1845 and moved to Texas. They were not satisfied, and came back as far as Pike County, Arkansas. They were soon settled, and wrote back to their Tennessee relatives about Arkansas. S. B. Reese, in his *Corinth Arkansas And Its Kinfolks*, writes about forty families from Middle Tennessee who settled in "the Ridge Country around Corinth" between 1845 and 1850. He says that twenty families were related, Charles and Rebecca (Norman) Jones and their descendants. The others, not relatives of the Jones families, included: "Tyler Bacon, Richard Copeland, William C. Hale, Issac Murray, Thomas McClure, John Tribble, William Hale, ..... Dixon, ..... McFarlan, Bill Campbell, ..... Snody, ..... Shofner, Charles Womack, two families of Reeses, John Bacon, two families of Chesshirs, ..... Holt, and ..... Lokey."

Some of these folk came from Lincoln County, Tennessee, and some from Bedford County, just north of Lincoln County. In those days, several families always traveled together. If these folks did not know each other as neighbors in Tennessee, they certainly got acquainted in the wagon train on the long journey of approximately 500 miles.

Richard was thirty-four years old when they moved to Arkansas. Their oldest child was ten or eleven years old at the time. After they were in Arkansas, five more children were born: Sarah Angelina, born March 23, 1850; James David, born April 9, 1852; George W., born July 28, 1854; Richard F., born November 19, 1856; and Andrew Jackson, born January 19, 1859.

They bought land one-half mile east of Corinth, and raised their family there. On August 9, 1851, Richard put in his application for Bounty Land, based upon his military service in 1836. A warrant was issued for 80 acres on May 12, 1852. He used that warrant at the United States Land Office in Washington, Arkansas, on September 6, 1852, to locate the land. On December 6, 1859, he obtained an adjoining 80 acres, and another adjoining 40 acres on January 26, 1860. Tax records of 1877 show that Richard Copeland owned one horse, eight cattle, two mules, six sheep, and thirty hogs.

Their oldest child was married about 1852; their youngest was married in 1880, less than a week after Sarah, his mother, died. Richard was left alone. He had lost the sight of one eye sometime earlier in his life.

Richard married Mrs. E. Garner sometime after Sarah died.

*The Children of Richard Todd and  
Sarah (Massey) Copeland*

Mary Jane was born October 21, 1838, in Lincoln County, Tennessee. She married Charles Wesley (Charlie Buck) Jones, who was born in 1832. He was left an orphan and was raised by his grandparents, Charles and Rebecca (Norman) Jones. This old couple was considered the "trunk" of the family tree described by S. B. Reese in *Corinth And Its Kinfolks*. Mary Jane and Charlie Buck Jones settled two miles south of Corinth and lived there about 30 years. Their 11 children were born there. Their first child was born in October, 1853, a few days before Mary Jane was fifteen years old, and their eleventh child was born in 1873. They had one set of twins: George Washington and Thomas Jefferson Jones, born in 1855.

In about 1880, they sold out and moved to a farm about three miles north of Nathan, east of Corinth.

Charlie Buck died there in 1901, and Mary Jane died in 1908; they are both buried at the Corinth Cemetery.

Thomas M. Copeland was born in Tennessee June 14, 1840. He was about nine years old when the family moved to Pike County (Corinth) Arkansas. He married Sarah Allen; their first child was born in 1862, during the war. They had ten children; the youngest was born in 1882.

They moved to the Pleasant Home community in about 1880 and homesteaded land there. Their second child, Wiley Newman (Pete) Copeland, married a Henderson and lived in the same neighborhood with J. A. Copeland's folks while Jady was growing up. Thomas M. Copeland died in February, 1886, at the age of 45; he was one of many who died that winter of pneumonia.

John Copeland was born in Tennessee on December 12, 1841. He served with the Confederate Army during the Civil War. He enrolled at Murfreesboro, Arkansas, in 1862, and served in Company C, later in Company E, First Arkansas Cavalry, under Colonel James F. Fagan. He was wounded slightly in the arm. After the war, he married Margaret Pauline Jones, daughter of Charles Brooks Jones and Jane (Chesshir) Jones. She was a granddaughter of Charles and Rebecca Norman Jones. John and Margaret were married in about 1866 and their first child was born in March, 1867. They had ten children, including a set of twins who both died when they were about two years old.

In the late summer or fall of 1875, John and Margaret, along with two of her brothers and their families, moved to Huckaby, in Erath County, Texas, south of Fort Worth.

Frances Copeland was born in Lincoln County, Tennessee, on January 20, 1844. Frankie, as she was called, became the second wife of William Wiley Crawford, after his first wife (Margaret Floyd Crawford)

died. William W. Crawford and his first wife had four children: Anthony, Charles, Mary, and David. His first wife died in February, 1863, and he married Frankie Copeland less than a year later. William W. and Frankie had seven children. The oldest was born in September, 1864, when Tony, William's oldest child, was 16 years old; the youngest child was born about 1878. They lived about two miles west of Corinth on the Centre Point Road. S. B. Reese writes that "all these boys and girls were apt to learn in school and had fairly good educations before they left Corinth."

Martha E. Copeland was also born in Tennessee, on April 5, 1846. She was next to the youngest when they made the long move from Lincoln County, Tennessee, to Corinth, Arkansas. She married Anthony Crawford, oldest son of William W. Crawford, whose second wife was Frankie Copeland, Martha's sister. Tony and Martha had eight children; the oldest was born in 1869. Tony Crawford was a blacksmith, and worked partners with R. C. Shofner at Corinth for several years. In about 1885 he moved to a place north of Nathan where he farmed, raised cattle, and still did some blacksmithing, too. Martha died there in January, 1917, and Tony died in January, 1922. They were both buried at Corinth.

William Cullen Copeland was the baby when Richard and Sarah Copeland moved from Tennessee to Corinth with the caravan in 1849. He was born February 19, 1848. He was already married to ~~Lola Smith~~ when he and his older brother, John Copeland, moved to Erath County, Texas, in 1875. They had seven children; two, or maybe three, were born in Arkansas, the others in Texas. Later, William moved his family farther west to Loraine, Texas. Some of his descendants later settled near Lubbock, Texas. The descendants of William Copeland and the descendants of John Copeland had an annual family reunion at Lubbock, Texas, for many years, and may still meet there each year.

Mary  
Elizabeth  
Scott

Sarah Angelina Copeland, the first of Richard's children born in Arkansas, was born March 23, 1850, at Corinth. She married Charles R. Watson, and their first child was born in September, 1867, when Sarah was 17 and Charles was 27 years old. They had fourteen children in 27 years; the youngest was born in August, 1894, when the mother was 44 years old.

The eighth child born to Richard T. and Sarah Copeland was James David, the father of Jady. He was born at Corinth April 9, 1852. He married Nancy Kansas Womack on June 2, 1872, when he was 20 and she was 17 years old. They had ten children; five of them were born after they left Corinth to settle in the Pleasant Home community five miles northeast of Murfreesboro—the same community where two of James David's brothers had already settled.

James David died in 1923, at the age of 71; Nancy was 76 when she died in 1931. More complete information is given on their family later in this chapter, since their fifth child is the subject of this biography.

George W. Copeland was born at Corinth on July 28, 1854. He was married in December, 1874, to Rebecca Ketura (Kitty) Jones, the daughter of Samuel and Perlina (Chesshir) Jones, who came from Tennessee. George and Kitty lived at Centre Point,\* where they had seven children. Their oldest, William Austin, was born September 27, 1875. Kitty died in 1899, when she was 45 years old. George moved his family to Childress, in West Texas, about 1890. There he married again and raised a second family of six children. He died at Childress in 1923, at the age of 69. His second wife, Lou Harris Copeland, was born in 1882; she was 27 and one-half years younger than George. She was still living at Childress in 1959 and corresponded with this writer.

\* In the old days, Center Point was spelled "Centre Point."

Richard F. Copeland was born November 26, 1856. He married Minerva E. Campbell. They had seven children, the first born about 1875. This family is the exception in the Copeland family as far as descendants are concerned. Only one of the seven children has any descendants. David married Frances Louise Dooley; they had three children. Butler married at the age of 70, and Silvanus was never married. Of the others, three of Richard and Minerva's children died at early ages, and one, Elize, died at age 17. Minerva died when she was 42 years old, and Richard when he was 59.

Richard and Minerva moved to the Pleasant Home community about 1880.

Andrew Jackson (Jack) Copeland was born January 19, 1859. He was married to Tacy Jones on July 4, 1880. They had three children before he died at age 24, on June 8, 1883. The only child who lived to be grown was Ethel, who married Thomas Lee Mobley. They had six children. After Jack died, Tacy married Walter C. Fricks, April 28, 1885. They lived at Saratoga, where Ethel grew up and married Mr. Mobley.

### *The Church at Corinth*

Richard T. Copeland was one of the charter members of the church at Corinth, which was established, or organized, in 1850. Old Brother Elijah Kelley from Antioch (Delight), about twenty-five miles to the east of Corinth, came to preach for them and to help organize the church. Davie D. Jones, Anthony Floyd, and Tyler Bacon, who had become involved in the restoration of New Testament Christianity before they left Tennessee, were the first elders of the Corinth church and held that position until after the Civil War. About two years after the church was organized, they built a good-sized frame church house across the road from the cemetery. A man named John S. Robertson preached for them for several

years, before the Civil War. S. B. Reese estimated that the church had about seventy-five members before the war.

For some time after the war the church made little progress. In about 1875, with a number of the younger men taking part, the church began to grow. A large tabernacle was built behind the old church house across the road from the cemetery. It was used for the big meetings that were held each summer. For many years they had built brush arbors for their annual meetings. The best preachers available were secured to hold their meetings each year, usually a different man each year. Old Brother Reese, in *Corinth Arkansas And Its Kinfolks*, wrote that he thought the average membership for about fifteen or twenty years was around four hundred, although many of the members lived "off a good ways and didn't attend regularly." This period of time must have been from about 1875 to 1890.

### *James David Copeland's Childhood and the Civil War*

When James David Copeland was born in April, 1852, the family was settled on their place one-half mile east of Corinth. They had been there about two and one-half years, so the farm was in pretty good shape. Richard had by that time applied for 80 acres of Bounty Land, and got title to it in September, after James D. was born.

James D. had seven older brothers and sisters and three younger brothers. He was almost seven years old when Andrew Jackson, his youngest brother, was born. In such a large family, which was not unusual in those days, the children had companions, even if they lived some distance from their nearest neighbors. There was also plenty of work for them to do. They grew up knowing the joy of play and the discipline of hard work.



This pattern of home life had not changed when Jady was growing up.

On May 6, 1861, when James D. was nine years old, the Arkansas convention voted 69 to 1 to secede from the union. The secession convention also drew up a new constitution to replace the one of 1836. Arkansas occupied an important position early in the War because of the importance of the Mississippi River and the struggle for Missouri and the Western frontier. The crops throughout Arkansas were generally poor in 1862, but those in 1863 were good. There were shortages, but the people of Arkansas generally suffered no hardships until 1864-1865. The people of North Arkansas suffered most from the War because of raids, divided loyalties, and bandit activities of the "bushwhackers" and "jay-hawkers." South Arkansas did not become a real battleground until 1864.

Little Rock fell to Union forces commanded by General Frederick Steele on September 10, 1863. After that, the people around Corinth—and in all of South Arkansas—felt the effects of the War more directly. The Confederate Government of Arkansas moved to Washington, in Hempstead County, and remained there until the end of the War. Washington was about 20 miles south of Corinth, near Hope. During that time the population of Washington mushroomed to as many as 40,000 people.

The *Washington Telegraph* of Washington, Arkansas, edited by John R. Eakin, was one of the few newspapers of the Confederate west to continue publication throughout the War.

All three of James David's older brothers were among the 50,000 Confederate troops furnished by Arkansas. John was the only one of the three to be wounded; he received a slight wound in the arm.



In the spring of 1864, there was much excitement and talk about the Union Army's expedition into south Arkansas. The Camden expedition was the last of the major fighting in Arkansas. The Federal troops captured Camden, about 65 miles southeast of Corinth, but lost engagements at Poison Springs, near Chidester, and Marks' Mills. They then retreated to Little Rock. During the final year of the War, only Southwest Arkansas remained firmly under Confederate control. The other parts of Arkansas were under Union control.

During the last year of the War, Arkansas suffered from critical shortages of supplies. Coffee, tea, and sugar were not to be had; flour and salt were very scarce. Acorns were boiled to make "coffee," salt was scraped from the packed floors of old smokehouses, and home-made remedies were used for medicine—made from leaves and herbs. The main foods were cornbread and sweet potatoes.

The War finally was ended on James David's thirteenth birthday, with Lee's surrender at Appomattox, on April 9, 1865.

#### *Marriage and the Family of James D. Copeland*

James David was 20 and Nancy was 17 when they were married on June 2, 1872. Nancy was the daughter of Wade H. Womack, who was born in Bedford County, Tennessee. Her father was wounded during the Civil War while serving as a Confederate soldier, and died of blood poisoning. Nancy's mother was a McFarland, another family that came from Middle Tennessee. Her grandfather Womack was Michael Womack, the man who, according to tradition, fired the fatal shot that killed the British General Pakenham in the Battle of New Orleans in January, 1815. He was a millwright by occupation.

Nancy had three brothers: Thomas Michael, born in 1851; John Benjamin, born in 1854; and David Arthur, born in 1857. Nancy was born May 17, 1855.

James David and Nancy settled on a farm near his father. Their first five children were born at Corinth: Lou Ella (or Luella, as her name is listed in the 1880 census) was born March 1, 1873. Harrison was born November 13, 1874, Charlie on December 31, 1876, Felix, April 3, 1879, and Jady, April 23, 1881.

All through the years families were leaving Corinth. John Copeland, with several other families, moved to Erath County, Texas, as early as 1875. Later, George Copeland moved to West Texas. Thomas and Richard F., James David's oldest and youngest brothers, moved to a community north of Murfreesboro before 1880. Land was still open for homesteading in that area. A number of other Corinth families, including Nancy's brothers, moved there. So, in the winter of 1881-82, James David and Nancy Copeland moved, when Jady was less than one year old. They homesteaded land which was about ~~five miles northwest~~ of Murfreesboro, and about three miles west of Pike City and two miles from the place where the Pleasant Home church house was built later. The Pike City road passed across the south part of the homestead.

6 miles  
N.E.

Making a home on a homestead was a tremendous undertaking. The land was covered with timber of all kinds—pine and hardwood. A site had to be selected for the house. This selection involved a number of different considerations, such as location in reference to roads—if there were any roads—water drainage, places for barns, smokehouse, and other “out-buildings.” The location of a water supply for family and livestock was another factor which was important to the family. A well had to be dug if a spring of water was not nearby. The underbrush had to be cleared away before they could even begin. The house was built of logs from nearby timber. Trees of the proper size had to be chosen, cut and “snaked” to the house site. They had to be trimmed, squared with an axe or froe, and notched. If a sawmill was anywhere near,

logs had to be hauled to the mill, and cut into rough boards for the rafters, floors, doors, windows, porches and for building furnishings.

The roof was made of oak shingles. A large oak tree with a straight trunk was selected for shingles. From the trunk were cut blocks the length of the shingles, approximately 20 to 24 inches. The blocks were then split so that shingles could be split off the smaller block. The finished shingle was approximately one-half to one inch thick, about six or eight inches wide, and 20 to 24 inches long, depending upon the length of the original block cut from the trunk of the oak tree.

The chimney was made by setting up four tall posts at the end of the house. The posts were connected with "rounds" or small sticks about six inches apart, on all four sides of the posts. "Cats" made of mud and straw were then stacked in and around the "rounds" or cross-pieces, forming a solid wall of mud held together by straw and sticks. As the months and years went by, the fire inside hardened the mud into a chimney which was hard as brick. From time to time the outside had to be patched with new "cats," depending on the type of clay or mud used.

Modern city folk find it difficult, if not impossible, to imagine what life was like for people like James David and Nancy as they built their home in the woods. They were not alone, however. Neighbors, many of them relatives, were nearby, and helped them in their clearing the land and building the house and barns. Families "swapped" work and very seldom was any money involved in "hiring" anyone to help do any of the work required.

In those days, sharing of work was also a social occasion. When a man was ready to get rid of the timber he had "deadened" the year before, they had a "log-rolling." Neighbors from miles around would come, bringing the whole family, their dogs, their horses or

mules, their tools and equipment. They also brought food, of course. The ladies would visit as they prepared the meals. The men cut the timber, "snaked" and rolled the logs together in huge piles to be burned.

In the early days, thousands of acres of the best timber ever grown were burned. Lumber was not a marketable product. Every farmer had more timber than he wanted or needed, and there was no way to change the logs into lumber, and no way to transport it to other places.

On one occasion when James David Copeland was clearing land and burning huge logs from virgin pine timber, a "visionary" who stopped by said, "The time will come when a tree like that will be worth \$5.00." Everybody laughed. Today such a tree would probably produce a thousand board feet of lumber, which would be worth at least \$100. But that day they laughed at the idea that a tree would ever be worth any money.

Every family had a smoke house where they kept their meat, dry beans, dry peas, dried fruits, etc. There was no means of canning or freezing foods to preserve them.

In developing a place, the site for an orchard was very important. They always had a few peach trees, apple trees, and plum trees. Some families had grape vines, too. Of course, wild grapes, or muscadines, were always available in the woods. The fruit from the peach and apple trees was split and dried on top of the smoke house or barn, or the lean-to kitchen. The fruit was spread out on a sheet on top of the sheds to dry in the sun. It took several days for it to dry. The children were assigned the task of bringing the fruit in quickly if rain came. Dried fruit made the best fried pies or cobbler pies ever eaten.

Jellies or preserves were also made, either from the fresh fruit or from the dried fruit later, in the winter. But that took sugar.

After two or three years James David and Nancy had the place in good shape. However, much of the land was very rocky and did not make the best farm land.

In the fall of 1888 James David and Nancy decided that the older children should have the opportunity to attend a better school than that available in the Pleasant Home community. Five of their seven children were school age: Lou Ella, the oldest, was 15, and Jady was seven.

After crops were gathered that fall, they moved to Nashville, which was only five miles south of Corinth. They lived there for that school term only, before moving again to the homestead place at Pleasant Home. Their eighth child, Zeta, was born while they were at Nashville.

They moved back from Nashville in time to make a crop on the homestead place in 1889. That same year they bought 160 acres of land about one and one-half mile south of the homestead, about one-half mile from the new Pleasant Home church house. Some of the land on that place had been cultivated since before the Civil War. One house on the place had been burned down during the Civil War.

James David and the older boys first built a barn to store the crop made on the homestead place. They then began building a small house of rough lumber. The family moved into the new house before it was completely finished—as soon as it could be lived in. The chimney was being built. A hole had been dug in the yard to get clay to make the “cats” for the chimney. They had not dug a well yet, but there was a spring of water about 200 yards from the new house.

One day while James David was at Murfreesboro, the family was cleaning up around the unfinished house and burning trash. About dark they discovered that the house was on fire! The whole family frantically rushed

to the spring with buckets, pans, or any container available. They finally formed a water-line and soon had the fire put out. After the fire was out, one of the smaller children fell into a hole of water on the other side of the house. The hole which had been dug in making the chimney was filled with rainwater from a recent rain. There had been enough water, within a few yards, to put out a dozen fires.

Later they built a new house about a half mile from the Pleasant Home church building. The family worked on the new house for more than a year. James David had rough lumber sawed at the mill in the same community. He hand-planed the lumber for finishing the walls and ceilings inside. They moved into the new house sometime between the time Alvin was born in December, 1890, and the birth of Bessie in February, 1894. That house was to be the home of James David and Nancy until his death in 1923.

Jady's oldest sister, Lou Ella, was married in 1895 to George Kelley. They had one son, born in December, 1895. Lou Ella died on February 11, 1896, and the baby died April 16 that same year. This happened when Jady was about 15 years old.

William Harrison Copeland was born at Corinth, November 13, 1874. He married Lula Hare on June 16, 1904. They had six children: Vera, Aline, James Fridell, William Forest, Cecil Clarence, and Harrison Paul. They lived at Pike City, at Delight, and in later years at Texarkana. Lula died in 1951 and Harrison died in 1966.

Charles Milton Copeland was born on the last day of December, 1876, at Corinth. On Christmas Eve, 1896, he was married to Lillie Ann Roberts. They had five children: Bryan, Morton Stanley, Lou Ella, Mary Alice, and Herman.

Charlie was a school teacher for many years. He taught at Hickory Plains, Macedonia, Antoine, Pleasant

Home, Pike City, and perhaps other places. In 1918 he moved to Little Rock and there worked for the U. S. Postal Service until his retirement. He was an elder in the Central church in Little Rock for many years. Lillie died August 26, 1960, at Little Rock; less than a year later Charlie died on May 25, 1961.

Felix Errett Copeland was born April 3, 1879, at Corinth. His first marriage was to Ludie Henderson. Homer, Felix's only son, was born August 15, 1900, and Ludie died less than three weeks later, on September 2, 1900. Felix's second wife, Cora Wingfield, died in 1920. Later he married a third time, this time to Laura Shipp. Felix died in 1958.

Jairus Augustus (Jady) Copeland was born at Corinth, also, on April 23, 1881. He was married to Georgia Watkins on December 21, 1898, when he was almost 18 years old and Georgia was almost 17. They had thirteen children; all but one lived to be grown. The names and birthdates of their children can be found in the Appendix, pages 189-192, in a "Chronology of Some of the Important Events in the Life of J. A. Copeland."

Lemuel Walters Copeland was born on September 20, 1883. In September, 1901 he was married to Mollie Brock. They had nine children: Aubrey Basil, who died as an infant; Austin Clement; Guy Nelson; Levadell; Ralph; Lillie Cortelle; Champ Clark; Elton Woodrow, who died in a prison camp in World War I; and Ida Mae. "Lem," as he was called, died of cancer December 10, 1930.

Cora Zenobia (Nobia) Copeland was born March 10, 1886. She married Curtis Hughes and they had five children: Carrie, Doyle, Erma, Helen, and Libbie. Nobia died at Delight in 1929 at the age of 43. Mr. Hughes later married Alice Burnham, the widow of Archie Burnham.

Zeta Arthur Copeland was born October 11, 1888, at Nashville. He married Cassie Chapel in 1908; they had three children: Eunice, Opal, and Harold. Cassie and Zeta were divorced in 1936, and Zeta was married to Coy Riddle in December, 1944. Zeta died in 1956.

Alvin Cummings Copeland was born December 9, 1890. He was married in 1911 to Lizzie Alexander. They had two sons: Hobart William and Clovis. Alvin died September 14, 1974, some years after Lizzie died.

Bessie Mae Copeland was born February 19, 1894. In 1913 she married Leonard Stark, and they had one daughter, Jeanette. Leonard died in November, 1930. Bessie later married T. W. Croom; he died January 22, 1964. Bessie lives in New Mexico.

In addition to the ten children above, James David and Nancy reared one grandson, Homer Copeland, Felix's only child. Homer's mother died when he was two weeks old. He lived with his grandparents until he was married to Sallie House January 29, 1920.

James David Copeland was a well-built man, with large frame, and was relatively thin of stature. His eyes were blue, his complexion light, or rudy, and he had dark hair in his younger years. In his mature years he wore a moustache and chin whiskers; when he was 55 years old in 1908, he shaved his chin whiskers. He kept his moustache, although in his later years he kept it clipped very short. His hair became thinner and gray in his later years.

"Uncle Jim," as the younger generation called him, was one of the faithful leaders of the church at Pleasant Home for many years. Many of the people who settled in the Hickory Plains and Pleasant Home communities moved there from Corinth. These included, among others, the families of the Copelands, the Watsons, the Hughes, the Womacks, and the Houses. The church at Corinth was strong at that time, and a number of young



men were well-grounded in the teachings of the Bible. For several years they worked to build interest in the church in the new community. Each summer meetings were conducted under brush arbors. Throughout the year they met for worship in the homes of the members.

For some time they met in an abandoned "squatters" shack near the spot where the church house was built later. Split-log seats were placed in the shack for the people to sit on. The ground was the floor, and hogs had used the shack for a home in bad weather. On one occasion, while Brother J. R. Jones was preaching, the dogs outside began chasing some hogs. The hogs naturally ran for their shelter. In they came, followed by the barking dogs! The people scattered. Brother Jones, who was easily upset anyway, gave up; he did not finish his sermon, but walked outside, murmuring that if they could not keep the hogs out of the house, he would not preach.

Mr. Jim Watson operated a sawmill that was located a few hundred yards from the place where the church house was built. The first church house was built in about 1890 from rough lumber from that mill.

James D. Copeland was a natural leader. Loving the church, he was willing to assume the responsibilities required of those who lead. A devout man, he read and studied the Bible unceasingly, and read the *Gospel Advocate* regularly. Many mornings when other members of the family got up, they found him reading the Bible or the *Gospel Advocate* by lamplight. Another common scene, in the summertime, was Uncle Jim resting at noon on a "pallet" in the open hallway, reading his Bible.

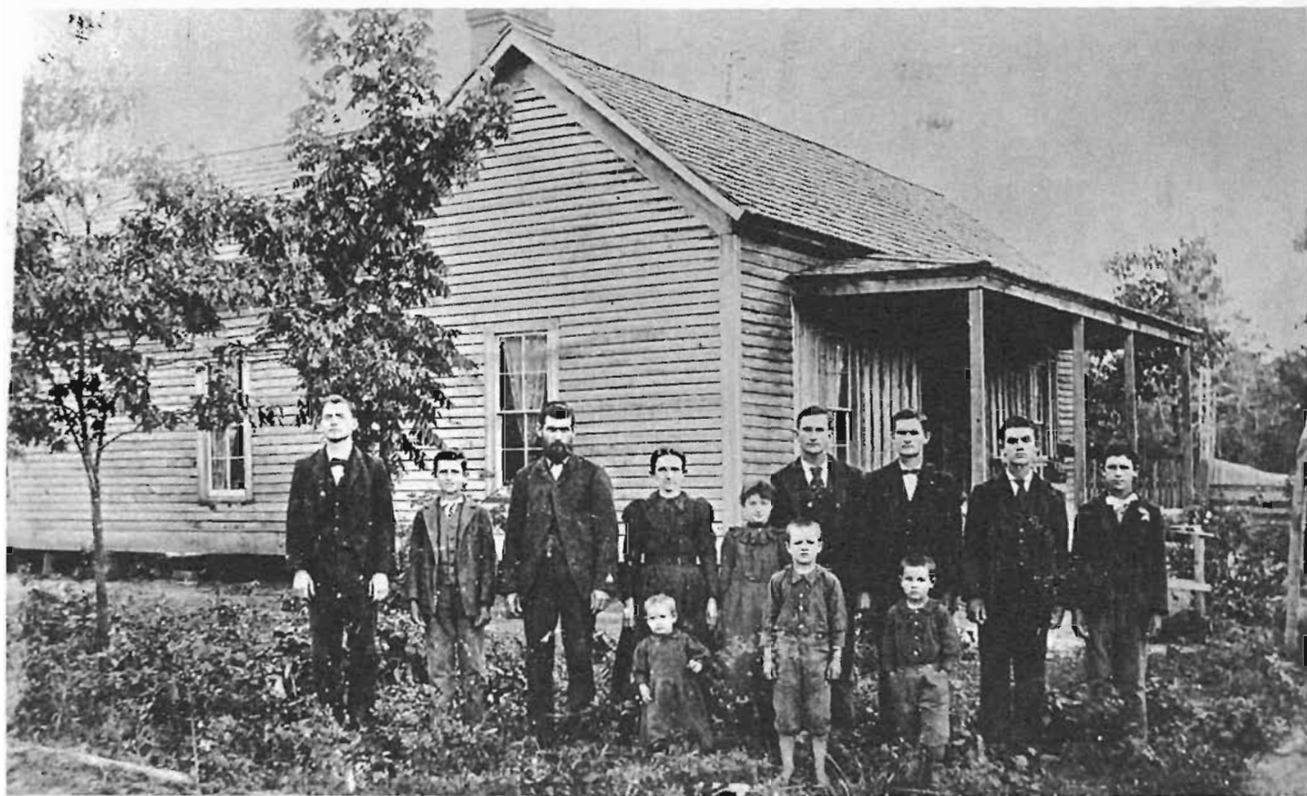
Singing and teaching others to sing was a source of great pleasure to Uncle Jim. He was called on to teach singing schools in surrounding communities, as well as at Pleasant Home. He delighted to see the youngsters of each generation developing their ability to sing and

enjoy singing. For him, this was an extremely important part of the work of the church. For many years, the church at Pleasant Home has been known as a singing church. Many, many people have come to accept the truth because of the influence of sacred music. Through the years, several outstanding singers and song leaders have come from the Pleasant Home community. Perhaps the best known of these is Earl Womack, who is a nephew of Uncle Jim Copeland. He has taught singing schools far and wide, and has had several songs published.

Sons  
James David Copeland died December 27, 1923, the day Langley House was 30 years old. Ruth and Langley were living with her grandparents at the time. Grandpa Jim had been away from home about two weeks, visiting his youngest daughter, Bessie, and her husband, at Booneville. He had stopped at Little Rock a few days to visit his ~~brothers~~ who lived there. His return trip was by train, stopping overnight at Delight, because the train did not go on to Pike City the same day. He spent the night with Grady Alexander, who lived on the Strawberry road, three miles out of Delight. The next morning he went back to Delight and caught the train to Pike City. Since no one knew for sure when he was coming home, no one met him at Pike City. He rode on a lumber wagon with Quincey Roberts, arriving, very sick, in the later afternoon. No one was at home when he got there, so he undressed and went to bed, never to get up again.

Grandpa Jim was concerned about the church to the very end. Brother Lee Starnes was holding a meeting at Pleasant Home during Christmas week. Each night Grandpa Jim would ask about the meeting. Although he was hardly conscious, he was pleased to hear that Gilbert was baptized on Christmas Eve.

After the meeting had ended, James D. Copeland died on Thursday afternoon, two days after Christmas Day. All of the folks were there when he died.



J. A. Copeland's boyhood home and family. House was built by James D. Copeland about 1890. Back row, left to right: George Kelley, Lemuel Copeland, James D. Copeland, Nancy Copeland, Nobia Copeland, Harrison Copeland, Charlie Copeland, Felix Copeland, J. A. Copeland; Front row: Bessie, Zeta, and Alvin Copeland.

*The Childhood of J. A. Copeland*

While he was still a child, Jairus Augustus Copeland was given the nickname "Jady." Throughout his lifetime he was known by "Jady" by his closest friends and the members of the family.

As a youngster, Jady was quiet and reserved. He was less "rowdy" than most children, with a naturally quiet disposition. However, he was energetic and enjoyed fun and games such as "tag" and ball, which required running. He was a pretty good ball player; he was good at catching and throwing, but was not as fast on foot as some boys.

By nature, it seems, Jady was of a more calm and serious disposition. In such a large family, there were the usual quarrels among brothers and sisters. However, Jady avoided the conflict situations most of the time. That is not to say that he was weak, or that he allowed his brothers or sisters to mistreat him. His manner and disposition was such that he was able to "get along" with them without much conflict.

At school, he was eager to learn; being a bright boy with a keen mind, he was able to keep up in his books with boys and girls who were older than he was. Jady enjoyed learning, and liked history, especially.

Jady always took religion seriously, even as a child. He attended worship services regularly, even when he had spent Saturday night with friends, and had to walk two miles alone to the church building, leaving his friends playing.

As a boy, Jady played with and visited the Watkins brothers, who were neighbors. In the early years, the Watkins family did not attend when the Pleasant Home church met for worship every Sunday afternoon. On one occasion, at least, Clara (Watkins) Delaney recalled seeing Jady leave to go to church. They had been having

great fun that morning sliding down a steep hill on a board slide. After lunch, they returned to the hill and were enjoying Sunday afternoon at the same hill. When the time came, Jady left his friends and the fun, to walk by himself to the Pleasant Home church building two miles away. He was ten or eleven years old at that time.

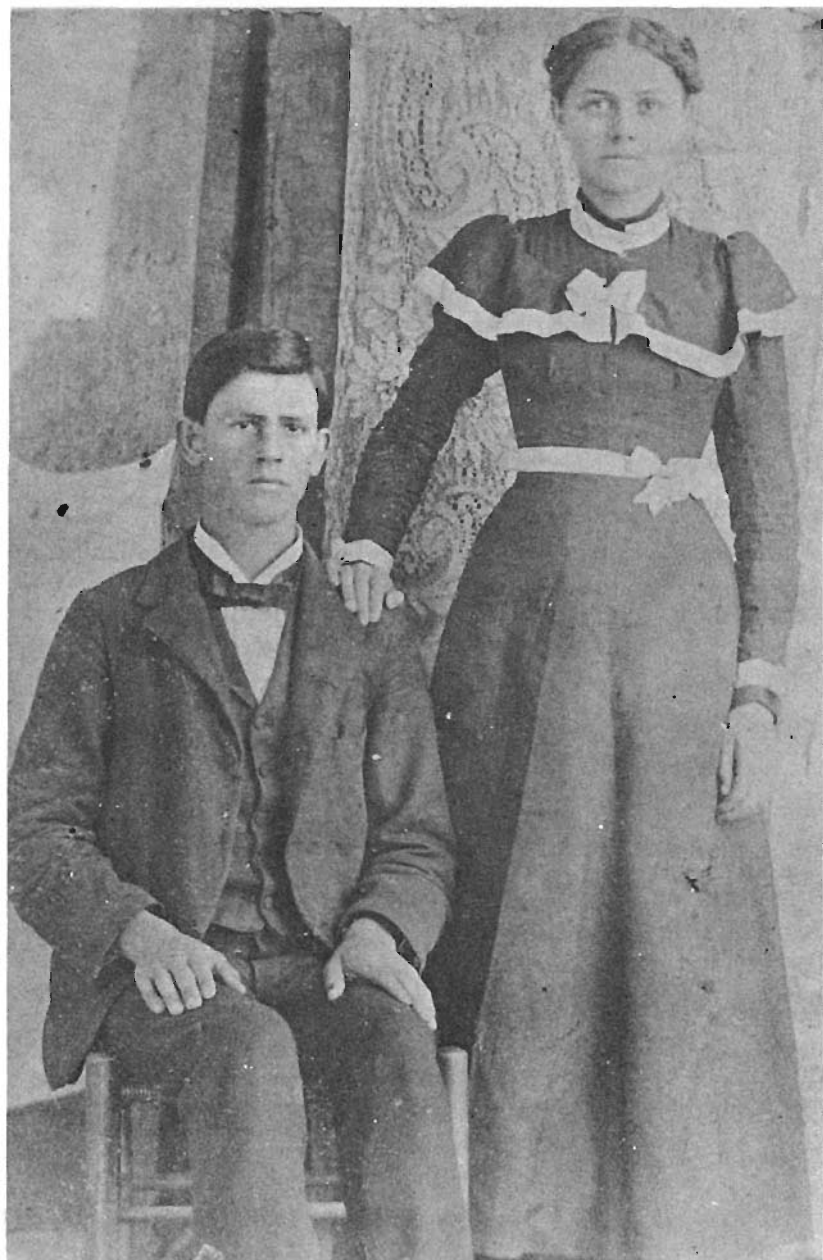
Jady's attitude was demonstrated on another occasion when the young people were having a singing at Pleasant Home. Some of the older boys became a little too loud and boisterous. Jady reminded Harrison, who was six years older than Jady, that they should not act that way "in the Lord's house."

No doubt Jady was greatly influenced by his devout father. James D. Copeland was an unusually religious man; such a father had a tremendous influence upon the serious-minded, sensitive boy. Jady was baptized in 1895 when he was 14 years old by Brother W. N. Thompson.

Jady was, as everyone is, the product of the combined influences of his heredity, his environment, and his own character. There are two aspects of character—one determined by the interaction of heredity and environment, the other related to the free will of the individual. One aspect of "character" is the natural disposition of the person, which determines to a great extent how one responds to his environment. Two brothers respond differently to the same environment because of the differences in their natural dispositions.

There is, however, another aspect of "character" which is the function of reason and free will. One's life is determined to a great extent by the quality of thoughts entertained, by the decisions and choices made. This is one of the basic principles taught by Jesus. In a real sense one's character is the accumulation of the thoughts entertained, the choices made, and the values accepted.

Jady's character, therefore, was the result of his conscious choice, from childhood, to live a life in harmony with God's will.



J. A. and Georgia (Watkins) Copeland  
Wedding Picture

## CHAPTER III

# Marriage and Early Years

Georgia Watkins, who became Jady's bride, was the first of her parents' children born in Arkansas. Wilson C. and Emma (Hardie) Watkins had moved to Corinth from Lumpkin, Georgia, in the fall of 1880. Emma's younger brother, Harmon Hardie, and her mother had moved to Arkansas earlier. In fact, Emma's mother died in Arkansas before she and Wilson moved to Arkansas.

Wilson C. Watkins and Pierce Hughes, his half-brother, drove the wagons from Georgia, but the women and children were sent on the train. After one year at Corinth, Wilson C. and Emma Watkins homesteaded land about four miles north of Murfreesboro. Georgia was born there January 20, 1882, the sixth of eight children. She grew up in the same community where Jady lived and grew up.

Wilson C. Watkins was a school teacher. He helped build the first school house at Hickory Plains and was the first teacher. He died in January, 1886, of pneumonia, at the age of 34, when Georgia was four years old.

Jady and Georgia were sweethearts all their lives. They were neighbors and went to school together at Hickory Plains, the school Georgia's father helped build. Georgia said she could not remember when she did not know Jady.



Since Georgia's mother was a widow, Jady's father and other neighbors helped the family from time to time. When the Copelands made sorghum molasses, for example, Jady's father would share with the Watkins family by taking them a barrel of molasses. It was quite natural, therefore, that Jady and Georgia knew each other from early childhood.

One of Georgia's earliest memories of their friendship was an event which happened during her second or third year in school. On a cold, winter day at school, she and a number of other students were standing before the fire in the huge fireplace at the end of the school room. Jady shyly approached her and handed her a hand-made "Valentine" with a message written inside.

Clara, Georgia's younger sister, recalled the following incident from a later time.

When Clara was about 13 and Georgia 15 years old, the two girls were walking to a neighbor's house to borrow some quilting frames. Clara noticed that Georgia seemed worried or preoccupied with something. They talked, and Georgia confided in Clara. Jady was bad sick at the time, and Georgia was concerned about him.

Jady and Georgia were married in the afternoon of Wednesday, December 21, 1898, at her mother's home. The ceremony was performed by Mr. Buck Thomas, Justice of the Peace and a Baptist preacher. They had an unusual audience. In addition to members of both families, all the students in the Hickory Plains school were present. Jady's older brother, Charlie, was the teacher. He had been married two years before on December 24, 1896. Charlie, of course, wanted to attend the wedding, so he walked with his students, large and small, to the home where the ceremony was to take place.

All of Jady's older brothers were there, as well as the younger ones who were students. In later years, Georgia recalled the manner of Jady's older brothers during the



ceremony. They showed reverence for the solemn occasion, which Georgia appreciated and kept as a fond memory.

It was a happy time, too. Georgia's mother prepared a special supper that night. The newlyweds spent that night with Georgia's folks, and went to the Copelands the next day. On Friday or Saturday, they went in a wagon to Murfreesboro to visit Georgia's Aunt Laura (Hardie) Kelley.

It was a joyous Christmas season. Georgia's older sister had a baby born on Christmas day. Jady and Georgia visited with their numerous relatives and enjoyed the many expressions of congratulations from well-wishers. Christmas day was on Sunday after their wedding on Wednesday.

Most of the Christmas gifts they received were items needed for setting up housekeeping. In those days when a young couple was married, friends and relatives shared with the newlyweds everything from goose feathers to be used in making pillows to dried fruit put up during the previous summer.

Although some older members of the community commented on how young Jady and Georgia were, they received encouragement from everyone. Within a month Georgia would be seventeen and Jady's eighteenth birthday was only four months away. What was more important than age, however, was the strength of character and purpose of the young couple. Both were known as dependable and hard working youngsters, with the qualities required for success. No one doubted that Jady and Georgia were ready to assume the responsibilities involved in making a home.

During the early part of January, 1899, they moved their things to a house on the Burseson place, four miles east of Murfreesboro. The place, later known as the Stewart place, was about two miles from Pleasant Home, in the Brocktown community, on the Delight road.

They raised their first crop there that spring and summer. During that summer Georgia had a spell of slow fever which lasted most of the summer. She was not able to help with the work on the farm. In fact, she needed help with her house work. Jady's parents persuaded them to come live with them that summer. Jady could not do the work in the field and take care of Georgia, too, his mother insisted.

In the fall they moved into the small house on Georgia's mother's place. Her father had built a small rent house on the homestead before he died. Through the years that house had been a blessing to Georgia's mother; the rent provided very little income, but they always had close neighbors.

Georgia was glad to move closer to her mother. It was especially important at that time, since Jady and Georgia's first child was to be born soon. On Monday, December 18, 1899, one month before Georgia was 18 years old, a beautiful baby girl was born. They named her Ruth Kansas: Ruth from the Bible character by that name and Kansas from Jady's mother, Nancy Kansas Womack. She was the first child in what was to be an extraordinary family.

During the next twenty-three years, twelve other children were born. All were strong and healthy children who inherited better-than-average physical and mental characteristics. For a period of three years, there were thirteen children living at the same time. After Clayton's tragic death in 1925, twelve of the thirteen survived for forty-six years. The youngest child was 48 years old when Willie died of cancer in 1971.

Thus, in many ways, the family of Jady and Georgia Copeland was an extraordinary family!

The Christmas season that year was a busy time. The young couple had been married one year, and already had the responsibility of a new baby. Although Ruth was

not the first grandchild on either the Watkins or Copeland side, the birth of a new baby was always a most important event in both families. Jady and Georgia had plenty of help. The many friends and relatives on both sides provided an abundance of free advice on how to raise children. It was good to know that their families were near and could be depended on if they were needed.

The new century was born exactly two weeks after the birth of Ruth. Jady and Georgia were young and looked to the future with hope and anticipation. Life was pretty much a local matter in those days. Of course, they heard about the war with Spain and Teddy Roosevelt, but travel and communication were so slow that national news reached Pike County, Arkansas, some time after such events had happened.

Besides, the people of the Pleasant Home community were occupied with their own work, plans, problems, and dreams. Life was determined more by one's own plans and efforts than circumstances of state or national events.

Jady and Georgia, therefore, were concerned with making a home, earning a livelihood, and rearing their children. They accepted the responsibility of helping Ruth to grow up to honor her namesake in the Bible. From the beginning, their goal was to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Years later Jady had Georgia embroider on a friendship quilt the scripture: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

Monday, January 1, 1900, was the first day of the new century and year. On that day Jady and Georgia moved their household to Jady's father's old homestead place, which they had decided to buy. They planned to farm the cleared land and cut the timber from the wooded area. There was still a considerable amount of virgin pine timber on the place.

Felix, Jady's brother, helped him that winter. They cut the logs to be hauled to the big sawmill which had been built at Pike City a few years earlier. During those years, many young men who farmed during the spring and summer months made extra money during the winter by working in the timber or at sawmills. Jady did that during several winters.

At that time Pike City was a thriving sawmill town. The virgin timber for miles around was being cut and hauled by wagon to Pike City to be cut into lumber. Both horses and oxen were used to haul the logs to mill.

Jady and Georgia raised only one crop on the old homestead place. They gave up the idea of buying the place. The land was rocky and difficult to farm, and it was some distance from the Pleasant Home church house.

After crops were gathered that fall (1900), Jady moved his little family to Billstown, a small community about eleven miles away. Billstown is located in the extreme southern part of Pike County, near the Little Missouri River. It is about five miles southwest of Delight.

The rich river-bottom land near Billstown was being cleared for farming. Mr. Daniel Watson was one of the land owners who was having land cleared. His brother, Sloman Watson, had married Georgia's older sister, Addie Lee. Sloman and Addie Lee were married when Georgia was only ten years old, and had lived near the Watkins family. It was Sloman Watson who encouraged Jady to move to Billstown to work for Sloman's brother, Daniel Watson. Georgia's mother and her two youngest children, Clara and Wilson, moved to Bills, also. At that time Clara was 17 and Wilson was 15 years old.

The move to Billstown was an important one because of the influence Mr. Daniel Watson had on Jady. A small group of Christians had begun meeting for worship at Billstown, although they had no church building. Mr.

Watson encouraged Jady and the other young men to take an active part in the worship by leading singing, reading from the Bible, and making comments on the scriptures they read.

Mr. Watson noticed that Jady had some natural ability in expressing himself in front of the group. He was already a serious student of the Bible and had been all his life. And, as a student at the old Hickory Plains school, Jady had been recognized as one of the more capable speakers. Mr. Watson, therefore, recognized in Jady the potential qualities needed for the making of a gospel preacher. Jady's first encouragement to develop his talents to become a preacher came from old Brother "Dan'l" Watson.

Jady and Georgia lived at Billstown almost a year. After working all winter clearing land, Jady decided to stay and plant a crop in the spring. He rented some of that rich, river-bottom land from Mr. Watson and planted.

It was a long, hot summer, especially for Georgia, who was to have another baby before cold weather came. As the time drew closer, both Jady and Georgia felt anxious to be near their folks at Pleasant Home. As soon as the crops were "laid by" they moved back home—to a house on the old Chesshir place, which was only one-half mile north of Jady's parents' place.

They had just enough time to move and get settled into their new home when, on Saturday, August 10, 1901, another baby girl was born to Georgia and Jady. She was named Elsie Clara. Ruth, their oldest child, was almost twenty months old. Four months earlier, while they lived at Billstown, Jady had celebrated his twentieth birthdate, and Georgia was nineteen years old at this time.

Again, they knew the wonderful feeling of being near their folks at a time of need. All of the brothers and

sisters on both sides of the family, as well as Jady's parents and Georgia's mother, were eager to help out at such times.

Although Jady was only 20 years old, he was maturing rapidly. He had always been a hard worker and serious about responsibility. Before they moved back home from Billstown, Jady had learned of some land which was for sale. It was one-quarter mile west of the Pleasant Home church house, on the road which connected with the Murfreesboro road at Brock Springs.

They decided to buy the land and build a house on it. During the winter of 1901-1902, Jady cut logs and worked at other jobs as he could. Every spare hour he had was spent at the "new place." Not only did he have to build a house, but some of the land had to be cleared for farming. He also dug a well, planted a small orchard behind the house, and built a smokehouse.

Jady and Georgia looked forward to having their own place. It was located about one-quarter mile from the church house, and more than a mile from Jady's parents' place. He worked hard that winter to get the place ready to move into by spring. Although the house was not completely finished inside, they moved in the early spring, 1902. However, Jady did not have enough land cleared and ready for farming, so he farmed land on his father's place that year.

During the spring and summer of 1902 Georgia was very busy taking care of two children and helping Jady with the garden. They continued to work on the house and improve the place. Ruth was almost three years old when Elsie reached her first birthday in August that year.

During that time Ab Henderson operated a sawmill at old Arp, near the Pike City road, about a mile from James David Copeland's place. There was a Post Office at Arp in those days. Jady worked at the sawmill at

various times, especially during the winter of 1902-1903. The mill had been in operation since 1896 or even earlier. Georgia recalled that Sloman Watson, her older sister's husband, had worked at the mill when Clifton was a baby. Clifton was Sloman and Addie Lee's second oldest child, born in February, 1896. Georgia also recalled that Jady had worked at the mill during the winter they were married, in 1898-1899.

Jady raised a crop on his father's land again in 1903. They lived in Charlie's house that spring and summer. It was only a quarter-mile from the James D. Copeland place. Charlie, another of Jady's older brothers, had bought another home place. He was a school teacher and was away teaching at that time.

Another baby was to be born soon, and Georgia and Jady wanted to be closer to his parents while the baby was little. Another practical reason they lived in Charlie's house those few months was that it was close to the land Jady was farming.

On Wednesday, April 29, 1903, another baby was born. They named her Willie Nobia; she was named for Jady's sister, Nobia. The oldest child, Ruth, was a few months past three years of age when Willie was born, and Elsie was not quite two years old.

After the crops were "laid by," and when the baby was about three months old, Jady moved his family back to their "new" place.

It may seem strange to some that Jady and Georgia moved so often. In those days it was not out of the ordinary, especially for a young couple. They had never been accustomed to the many luxuries found in homes today. And, in the case of Jady and Georgia, they were not "possessed by their possessions," as so many people today seem to be. They did not consider it any sacrifice, therefore, to move to another house which was only a mile away, for only a period of five or six months.

That fall, after the crops were gathered, Jady once again looked for work in the logging business. This time he found that a big timber operation was in progress in the mountain country southwest of Kirby. A railroad had been built to haul the logs out of the hills. It was so far back in the woods that the men lived in a camp. Each family built their own shack to live in. There was a company store, the "commissary," where they bought supplies.

Jady made arrangements to get the lumber from the company to build a two-room house. He moved his family to the "Pea Vine Camps," as it was called, for the winter of 1903-1904. It was quite a thrill for the children to see Jady coming home in the afternoon on the "Dinky" train, after working in the woods all day.

Since he was 17 years old, Jady had worked in the timber almost every winter. From the beginning there had been unpleasant consequences, but he had not realized that there was any connection between his frequent illnesses and the timber itself. During the spring and summer of 1904, however, he became very sick. The doctor, after reviewing Jady's history of the past five or six years, concluded that Jady was allergic to the turpentine in the pine timber. He advised Jady that he should stay out of the pine timber—that he should not cut logs any more.

Since 1901 at Billstown, Jady had taken an active part in the worship services when called upon to do so. He had led in prayer, had led singing, and helped with the communion service from time to time. Everyone said he did an unusually good job when he was asked to read from the scriptures and make a few comments after his reading. In those days they had preaching once each month, usually. On the other Sundays, when they did not have preaching, someone would read from the Bible.

Several of Jady's friends and relatives had, from time to time, suggested that he had the ability to become a



preacher. After the doctor told Jady that he should not work in the log woods any more, such advice was offered more frequently.

About this time the people at Billstown asked Jady to preach for them once each month during the coming year. He agreed to try. It was at Bills, in late summer of 1904, that Jady preached his first sermon. He kept his monthly appointment at Bills throughout the bad winter of 1904-1905.

The first protracted meeting, as they were called in those days, that Jady held was at Billstown in the summer of 1905. The small congregation still had no church building. The meeting was held in the school house on the hill where the Billstown cemetery is now.

Georgia's sister, Clara, was married to John Delaney at Billstown on August 28, 1904. Mr. Bill Stokes, a Justice of the Peace, performed the ceremony. Their first baby was born on May 17, 1905. In later years Clara remembered walking and carrying the baby to attend the meeting Jady held at Billstown in 1905.

At the time they decided to leave the "Pea Vine Camps," which was about twelve miles from Pleasant Home, the Alfred Alexander family was living in their new house. So Jady moved his family to live with his parents for a short time, until the Alexanders moved out of their house.

While they were living at the logging camps, Georgia had ordered a sewing machine from Sears, Roebuck, and Company. It cost \$12.00, but after talking it over with Jady, they decided it would be worth it! The machine was delivered after they had moved back, while they were at James David Copeland's house. Georgia had never owned a sewing machine; she was very proud of the new machine. It was so much more convenient to do her sewing at home, instead of having to go to her mother's or to Jady's mother's house. By this time she

had three little girls to sew for, as well as herself and Jady. Willie, the baby, was almost a year and one-half by this time. "Store-bought" clothing was very rare in those days.

It was good to be back home, in their own house. That fall Jady returned to the camp and tore down his camp house. He moved the lumber home and used it to finish the house and build a barn.

It was good to have the house sealed inside, as the winter of 1904-1905 was one of the coldest in their memory. In fact, the older people said they had never seen such a winter. The snow and ice did not melt for weeks! And then came the floods in the spring of 1905. For more than half a century the older people talked about the unusual winter and spring of 1905. Nearly everybody had a complete crop failure that year.

Another important event occurred that spring. On Thursday, March 23, 1905, another baby girl was born. Four girls, and not a boy baby yet! Most fathers would have been somewhat disappointed. If Jady ever felt such disappointment he never expressed it. He was only happy that both Georgia and the baby were well. What should they name the new baby girl? As Jady and Georgia discussed this question, Georgia suggested the name "Vida." She had recently read a story in which the main character was named Vida.

Because of the spring floods, the crops were late that year. Jady tried to farm the blackland farm on the Burleson place, where he had raised a crop the first year he and Georgia were married. The crop almost completely failed because of the cold, wet springtime.

During the summer Jady began looking for other work, since the crop was failing. He learned about a new kind of woods product mill at Nathan. The mill was making staves to be used in making barrels. These staves were cut from hardwood timber, not pine. Jady's

younger brother Zeta and Georgia's youngest brother Wilson went with Jady to find a job. All three got jobs and Jady decided to move his family to Nathan. Zeta and Wilson lived with them while they were there. At that time Zeta was 16 and Wilson was 19 years old. Vida was the baby and Ruth, the oldest, was five and one-half.

Jady preached at Nathan a few times while they were there; he baptized his first convert at Nathan. The people at that congregation encouraged him in his efforts in preaching. Some of the members were related to Jady. Aunt Martha Crawford was James D. Copeland's sister. They had lived north of Nathan since about 1885. Uncle Tony Crawford was a blacksmith and a farmer. Ruth and Elsie were old enough to remember their visits to the Crawford farm. They have, until this day, pleasant memories of those visits while they lived at Nathan.

In February, 1906, Jady moved his family back home, but continued to work at Nathan a few months longer. He went home each week-end, riding a horse the fourteen miles from Nathan to Pleasant Home.

In November, 1906, Georgia's brother Alto and his family moved back to Arkansas from Konawa, Oklahoma (Indian Territory). They were all at Georgia's mother's place: Alto and Emma with their two children and Jady and Georgia and their four girls. One of the joys of being part of a big family is the happy times when everyone gets together, like at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

While the children played and the ladies cooked, Jady and Alto went squirrel hunting. They talked of many things as they enjoyed being together again. Jady and Alto were the same age and had known each other all their lives. Alto and his family had been gone more than a year, and everyone was glad they were back. For the time being they would stay with Alto's mother, since they did not have a house yet.

Alto and Jady talked about finding them a place to live. Jady mentioned that the Stephens place was for sale, but Alto was not interested. Jady said that he would like to buy the Stephens place, but did not have the money to make a down payment. He needed more farm land, but did not have time to clear his land. As they talked, Alto suggested that if Jady wanted to buy the Stephens place, that he would buy the place where Jady was living. At first they were not serious, but the more they talked and thought about it, the more both liked the idea. The Stephens place, also called the old Allen place, was perfectly located, Jady thought; it was only a quarter-mile north of his present place and just a little more than a quarter-mile from the Pleasant Home church house.

The deal was made. Jady would buy the Stephens place and sell Alto his place. The deed which was filed in the County Clerk's office at the Court House at Murfreesboro on November 30, 1906, shows that Alto paid Jady \$125.00 and signed notes for \$75.00 which were due on December 25, 1907, and December 25, 1908. The sixty acres and the new house were sold for a total of \$275.00.

The Stephens place had been homesteaded years ago by a man named Allen. There was an old log house, and connected to it was a good two-room part of the house which had been built by Mr. Stephens. Later, Jady tore away the old log house and rebuilt a good house. Still later he added to it again. He enjoyed doing carpentry work and through the years developed some skill in it.

Sunday, May 26, 1907, was a very important day in the Copeland family. After four baby girls, at last a boy baby was born! Jady preached at Pleasant Home that Sunday; his sermon topic was "The Only Begotten Son," based upon the New Testament passage found in John 3:16. Through the years, this has been one of the family jokes, that Jady preached about God's only begotten son

on the day of the birth of his and Georgia's first son. The new baby was named Sweeney Roy, after a preacher whose last name was Sweeney.

After eight years of marriage and several moves from one temporary home to another, Jady and Georgia had settled in a place which was to be home for seventeen years. There was to be another temporary move, however, a move that turned out to be extremely important to their future.



J. A. Copeland family while at Center Point in 1908. Back, left to right: J. A., Elsie, Willie, Ruth, Georgia; Front, left to right, Vida and Sweeney.

## CHAPTER IV

### In School at Center Point

The turning point in Brother Copeland's life came in 1907 when he decided to move his family to Center Point so he could attend high school. He was getting more and more calls to preach; the feeling of responsibility was increasing. For several years men he respected had encouraged him to develop the potential ability he obviously had. So, he needed more education.

The decision was not an easy one. In those days being a preacher of the gospel was not an easy life. In fact, such a decision meant a more difficult way of life. It meant longer days and harder work. The task of making a living for the family from the farm required endless effort and long, hard hours of back-breaking work. Added to that, the hours of study at night by kerosene lamp, and the traveling by horseback or buggy to places near and far to preach on week-ends required more determination and dedication than most men had.

In Brother Copeland's case, it was even harder because he already had a large family. Also, from the beginning Brother Copeland was keenly aware of the tremendous responsibility he was taking upon himself. Throughout the more than a half a century which followed, he lived with the consciousness of that awesome responsibility. In discussing this, he would often refer to the statements made by the Apostle Paul who felt the

same burden: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:9). "Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:28). He was fully aware that the Bible teaches that those who are teachers and preachers run the risk of receiving "greater condemnation." (James 3:1).

Serving the Lord had always been important to Brother Copeland, but the move to Center Point represents a point in time when his two major goals in life were reversed. Up to that time, he had been concerned with making a living for his family and serving the Lord at the same time. From that time forward, doing the Lord's work came first, providing for the physical needs came second. Although few ever reach such a turning point in life, Brother Copeland's decision was inevitable. As he prayed for divine guidance, Jesus' words came to his mind again and again: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and these things shall be added unto you." He knew that Abraham of the Old Testament did not hesitate to go where God told him, even into a faraway and strange land. The Copelands were moving only sixteen miles to a community not too different from their home community.

Since childhood Brother Copeland had made decisions, not on the basis of what was easy, but on the basis of what was right. And along with that, when he decided to do anything it was understood that he would do the best he could. It was necessary, therefore, for him to get more education in order to do a better job of preaching the gospel.

Brother and Sister Copeland had five children at the time they moved to Center Point. Some may have thought it irresponsible, but the move represented a decision to put God and God's work first in their lives.



They really did trust God's promises that all of the physical necessities would be provided if they placed higher priority on spiritual values.

Such were to be his priorities in life, and as a result in the years that followed the life of the entire family was determined by that standard. Regardless of the trials that life would bring, the decision to put first things first would always lead to triumph. "Now thanks be unto God, which causeth us to triumph in Christ . . ." (2 Corinthians 2:14). "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience, and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." (Romans 5:4).

Center Point had one of the best high schools in Arkansas in 1907, when twenty-six year old Jady Copeland decided he must have more education. The fact that it was only six miles from Corinth influenced his choice of Center Point. Jady had relatives living in the country around Corinth; his grandfather had settled there when he moved from Middle Tennessee in 1849. Jady himself had been born in Corinth.

Early on a crisp October morning the family, with the help of two neighbors, started on the sixteen mile journey. The wagons, which belonged to Alto Watkins and Dave Beavert, had been partially loaded the evening before. Only the beds and a few other essentials had been left until morning. At daybreak they got up, ate breakfast, and finished packing and loading. They placed everything on the wagons carefully, saving enough room for the passengers. There were eight riders, counting the baby: the two drivers, Georgia, and the four older children. Jady rode his horse, the same horse he used as transportation to his week-end preaching appointments.

They traveled the usual route to Murfreesboro by the Roberts place and Brock Springs. They crossed the

Little Missouri River at the "ford" where the Muddy Fork flows into the river, and traveled on to Corinth, then to their new home about a mile and one-half or two miles east of Center Point. The trip took most of the day; they arrived at their new home about mid-afternoon. As they passed the few houses scattered along the way, children stood on the front porches to look at the movers. At one or two houses, the people waved as they recognized Jady, who had preached at some of the communities, especially at Corinth. They had arranged to rent a house from the Price family, who would be their neighbors. The Tinsley's were to be their neighbors also, to the delight of Ruth and Elsie; the Tinsley's had children who soon became Ruth's and Elsie's new friends and playmates.

Moving was not a new experience for Jady and Georgia. Since their marriage almost nine years earlier, they had moved several times. Most of the moves had been short distances, to different places in the Pleasant Home and Hickory Plains communities. But the move to Center Point was different; the reason for the move was to affect the future more than any previous move.

At school Jady took his studies seriously; he had a serious purpose in being there. He studied history, which he liked very much, English, and also speech, which was a very special treat. Jady had always been an apt student; he learned easily and his memory was good. He was especially good in history. In later years he was strong in his preaching on the history of the church. Public speaking seemed fairly easy for him. As a teenager, at Hickory Plains school, he had been known as one of the most talented in "declamation" and "extemporaneous speaking."

At Center Point his grades were the best in all subjects. He had somewhat an advantage over most of the students, since he was 26 years old—at least ten years older than most of the students.

At the end of the first term there, in the spring of 1908, Jady took part in a speech contest and won second place. The only criticism the judges could offer was that he spoke too loudly for the occasion.

Each morning Jady walked to school with the children. Ruth was in her third year and Elsie in the second year of school. Willie had not started to school at that time. The Tinsley girls, Clara, Mae, and Jo, walked with them.

While they lived at Center Point, they did not raise a crop. They had a garden and a corn patch to raise feed for the horse, but did not raise any cotton. Each weekend Jady preached at Corinth, or Nathan, at Center Point, Chapel Hill, or some other community close enough to reach by horseback. He worked at a store on Saturdays. It was a frugal existence, but then they had never enjoyed luxurious existence.

### *First Wedding Ceremony*

While they lived at Center Point, when Jady was 26 years old, he was called upon to perform his first marriage ceremony. In order to perform such a ceremony, he had to have the proper credentials. By talking to the older men, he learned that the state required that a preacher file at the County Clerk's office a record showing when and where a church "ordained" him.

On Monday morning, December 23, 1907, two days before Jady performed his first marriage ceremony, he filed the following document at the County Clerk's office in the Court House at Nashville:

To Whomsoever the Presents Come—Greeting:

This is to certify that J. A. Copeland has on this day been ordained a Minister of the Gospel and is highly commended unto all the saints everywhere.

Done by order of the church of Christ worshipping at Center Point, Arkansas, December 22, 1907.

Elders:

s/s T. A. Floyd  
s/s W. M. Gilbert  
s/s J. H. Neese

Filed for record on this 23rd day of December, 1907, at 10:00 o'clock a.m.

S. T. Anderson, Clerk

Snow Floyd, who was Jady's third cousin, and Tom Jacques were the couple to be married. Jady's mother and Snow's father were first cousins.

The ceremony was performed on Wednesday, on Christmas day, 1907. Elsie and Ruth who were six and eight years old at the time remember the young couple driving up in a buggy and stopping in front of the house. Jady went outside, greeted them and after a very brief conversation, conducted the ceremony with the couple sitting in the buggy. Within a few minutes at the most, the couple "went on their way rejoicing."

In our day of elaborate, sophisticated "church" weddings, it may seem strange that a couple was married while sitting in a buggy—without even going into the house. However, in those days, such a ceremony was not at all uncommon. In fact, it may have been the usual rather than the unusual procedure.

Snow and Tom Jacques, whose nickname was "Boss," reared their family at Center Point. Sixty-five years later, in August, 1972, their oldest son, Calvin Jacques, was one of the many people present for the Center Point Reunion.

Jady and his family were away from the home place at Pleasant Home approximately a year and one-half. They moved after crops were gathered in the fall of 1907, and moved back home in time to begin the spring planting in the spring of 1909. While they were away from their home, a neighbor, Edgar Womack and his family, lived in their house at Pleasant Home and kept the place up. Unfortunately, Mr. Womack's wife died while they were living in Jady's house.



J. A. Copeland  
About 1916

## CHAPTER V

# The Country Preacher

Jady's entire life had been spent in preparation for preaching the gospel and living the Christian life. As a child he had been, by nature it seems, more serious about religion than most youngsters. For example, he had always enjoyed sitting with his father and the visiting preacher to hear them discuss the Bible and religious topics. He had worshipped regularly and reverently all his life. Reading and studying the Bible had always been a habit with Jady. His father received the *Gospel Advocate* regularly all of Jady's life. After he married, Jady subscribed to the *Firm Foundation* and received it throughout his lifetime.

During the years Jady was growing up, his father, James David Copeland, was one of the elders, and a conscientious leader, in the Pleasant Home church. He insisted on "keeping the preacher" when they had a series of meetings or week-end preaching. Jady's father enjoyed visiting with the preachers and discussing the Bible with them. As Jady grew up, he learned to thoroughly enjoy such conversations and discussions.

Even after he married, he and Georgia would stay at his father's home while the preachers were visiting there. On one occasion, which Georgia recalled and related in later years, she and Jady were staying at the Copelands' while Brother W. N. George was holding a meeting at

Pleasant Home. Jady was working at the sawmill which was about a mile north of the James D. Copeland home. Each afternoon, as soon as he got off from work, Jady would rush to his father's home to be with him and the preacher. Georgia was there, too. Later in the week, Georgia decided they should go home. After all, the Copelands had five children at home, and the preacher. She thought that she and Jady should be at their home. They had no children at that time.

She decided, therefore, to meet Jady at the mill when he got off from work and they would go home. Her father-in-law insisted that she not walk, so he put the side-saddle on the horse and helped her mount the horse. As she rode along the path through the woods toward the mill, she met Jady jogging along, rushing to be with his father and the preacher.

Although Georgia persuaded Jady that they should go on to their home, she could tell that he was terribly disappointed.

Now, ten years later, Jady had matured, and had gained experience in preaching the gospel. He had gone back to school to increase his basic education. He felt much more confident in his ability to do an acceptable job in his preaching.

Not long after Jady and the family moved home from Center Point, he was invited to hold a meeting on "The Ridge," near Corinth. It turned out to be the most successful big meeting thus far in his work of preaching the Gospel. He was 28 years old, and he was well-prepared. His lessons were well-chosen and were presented with great force and feeling. His earnestness and deep spiritual conviction and purpose were communicated to the audience night after night. Many people responded and as the meeting progressed it became evident that a real revival was taking place. The scheduled closing date was changed; the meeting was extended several days. More



people were converted and baptized. The word of this meeting spread and it was talked about for many years as one of the truly great revival meetings in that area.

As word of that meeting was passed around, Jady began receiving more and more calls to preach. In fact, he received so many invitations for meetings and week-end appointments that it was not possible for him to accept all of them. Through the years, he made a practice of scheduling his meetings and appointments on the basis of the order in which the invitations came. Many times he could have chosen to go other places that would have provided greater financial rewards, but that was never considered. He accepted invitations as they came.

In those days most country congregations had preaching only once each month. Jady usually preached at a different place each week-end, but often had standing appointments to be at a certain place once each month. Preachers spoke of their "first-Sunday appointment" or "fourth-Sunday appointment," meaning that on the first Sunday of each month they had an appointment to preach at a certain place. The custom was to have three services on the week-end when they had preaching. He would leave home early enough on Saturday to arrive in the community in time for a Saturday night service. Then there were two services on Sunday. Jady usually stayed in the community Sunday night and returned home on Monday.

Through the winter months, usually from October through May or June, he preached by monthly appointments at congregations close enough to be reached by buggy, horse, or train. During the summer months he farmed. He held meetings through the summer months, but scheduled them after he had the crops where the children, with their mother's help and management, could finish the crops. His fall meetings usually extended through October and sometimes into November.

Distances and transportation were always a problem. The country north of Murfreesboro is somewhat mountainous. He had to ride a horse when going to preach at congregations around Kirby and Glenwood. He preached at Hopper, for example, over a period of forty-five years. In the early days he always went on a horse. Often he went in a buggy to communities closer to his home, and where there were better roads. If he were going to Corinth, or Delight, for example, he either rode a horse or went in the buggy.

However, Jady received many invitations from places which were too far away to go on horseback or by buggy, so often he traveled by train. This really presented problems; the nearest depot was at Murfreesboro, about four miles away. However, because the railway line from Murfreesboro connected with certain points only, he often had to go to Delight or Highland to catch a train. To go to Prescott, Bluff City, or surrounding areas, for example, he had to catch the train at Highland, which is northeast of Nashville. It was about ten miles from Pleasant Home to Highland.

Some of Ruth's most vivid memories of her early life are of the trips she made with her father to catch the trains.

(One of the unique features of large families is the span of years between the oldest and youngest children. For example, Ruth was almost 22 years old and had three children of her own when Jady Wilson, the youngest child, was born. Each has his or her own memories of childhood years, a generation apart.)

Ruth was still a small girl when she began going with her father to catch the train. They usually left home early Saturday morning, sometimes before daylight. Ruth's job was to drive the horse and buggy back home after Jady caught the train, and then go meet him on Monday when he returned.

On one occasion, darkness engulfed her while she was driving, alone, to Murfreesboro. It was a cloudy Monday; the clock had stopped and they did not know the time. Finally, Georgia reminded Ruth that she should start. Georgia put the harness on "Ole Molly" and hitched her to the buggy. By the time Ruth got to the Woods' place, with still three miles to go, it was getting dark and had started raining. The child was frightened, but she had no choice but to go on.

As she approached Murfreesboro, she suddenly realized that she did not know how to find the depot in the dark. While she was pondering her predicament, filled with anxiety and apprehension, someone jumped on the back of the buggy. Her fright turned to joy when she discovered that it was her Uncle Zeta. He had watched for her at the edge of town and met her there. He took off his raincoat, put it on Ruth, and buttoned it snugly under her chin.

Zeta told her that her father was waiting at Kelley's store, west of the square. He took the reins and drove quickly to the store to find Jady. All was well when she was with her father.

Later, when Vida was old enough to travel with her, she and Ruth were caught in a snowstorm while returning from Murfreesboro. They had taken Jady to catch the train on Saturday morning. As they prepared to leave for home, Jady told them to go home by way of Mr. House's place on the Hot Springs road. It was very cold and cloudy. Jady knew that it might snow and that the Hot Springs road was the best way home.

Before they were a mile out of town the snow started. The farther they went, the heavier the snow came down! It was cold and dry, so the ground was soon covered. They could hardly see the road where they were to turn off the main road. Near Uncle Dave Beavert's home there were some logs beside the road. They were covered with snow and hardly visible. One log was on the road,

lying paralled with it. The buggy wheels straddled the log and the front left wheel was lifted off the ground when the axle reached the butt of the log. They were stuck!

The girls left the buggy and walked to the Beavert place. Vida, who was only about six years old, was crying; they were freezing! While they warmed themselves by the fireplace, Uncle Dave got the buggy off the log and drove it to the house.

They were almost home when the buggy came to a sudden stop! The path was very narrow with small trees growing on each side. The back wheel of the buggy had passed around a small "sapling," which became wedged between the wheel and the body, or bed, of the buggy. They were stuck again!

The girls walked home in the deep snow, half frozen. Sweeney and Gilbert went back after "Ole Molly" and the buggy; Ruth and Vida had had all the snow they wanted for one day!

Such are the memories of the oldest child, whose duty was taking Jady to catch the train. Ruth did that job for several years, until the boys were old enough to take the job. Sweeney was only nine years old when Ruth married, but he took that responsibility.

After their return from Center Point in 1909, the Copeland family lived at Pleasant Home for fifteen years. Those were good years, filled with hard work and good times. They were at home—in the same community where both Jady and Georgia had grown up. All of the younger children were born at the Stephens place.

These were important years for a number of reasons. Jady was doing the work he knew God expected him to do. Small congregations of the church everywhere needed men like Jady to help them become established. His style of preaching was most effective with audiences of country folk like himself. He always thought of himself

as a "country preacher." The Apostle Paul's words found in 1 Corinthians 2:4 describe Brother Copeland: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

One of Jady's cousins, Austin Copeland, who also grew up in the country, once asked Jady about the difference in "country" preachers and "big shot" preachers. "Why is it," Austin asked, "that 'big shot' preachers preach only about one good sermon out of twelve, while all the country preachers' sermons are good sermons?"

"Well," Jady answered, "I guess that us country boys have just enough sense to talk about what we know about."

J. A. Copeland never gave up the concept of the country preacher. In 1932 he wrote the following article for the *Gospel Light*. It expresses in his own words his concern for doing the Lord's work.

## THE COUNTRY PREACHER

J. A. Copeland

There is a great need today of the country preacher. I do not mean by this article that towns and cities should be neglected with reference to gospel preaching, neither do I mean to convey the idea that it is wrong for a preacher to be supported for full time in town, cities, and/or even in rural districts, where it can be done; but there are a great number of weak churches and mission points in the country and small towns that are not financially able to support a man for full time. We need a hundred preachers in Arkansas who are willing to live in the country on a small farm, raise their vegetables, truck, fruit, chickens, hogs, a little feed, and preach at some place in reach of them on Sundays in the winter and spring and do evangelistic work through the summer and fall. You may say that you see in the papers numerous calls by preachers for work. Yes, but how many have you seen asking for the kind of

work that I have described above? It seems that the greater number of preachers now are looking for full-time work with some congregation at a good salary and are not even willing to go out in the country and preach a few sermons at some mission point without extra pay.

I am not condemning the idea of a preacher doing local work in a city or town, but those congregations with which the local preacher labors should use him often at some mission point or to help some weak congregation. But it is my purpose in this article to encourage young preachers who like country life to settle down on a little farm and preach the gospel to a class of people that town and city preachers seldom reach.

Preachers should use business judgment as well as other people. They can live much cheaper out on the farm by putting in their spare time in the garden and on the farm, they can make a part of their living.

A brother said to me sometime ago, "Brother Copeland, when you get to where you can't preach, I don't know what we are going to do. We can't pay what most preachers want for their work." I know that many congregations can pay much more than they do, but that brother was telling the truth. They are few in number and poor in this world's goods but "rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom."

I believe, generally speaking, the country preacher has done more good than any other class of preachers. They have gone out into new fields, preached the Gospel in schoolhouses, under brush arbors, in private homes, yea, anywhere they had opportunities, and built up churches and preached for them until they were able to stand alone.

Some of the strongest preachers we have in Arkansas live in the country. Brother John T. Hinds, Brother Joe Blue, and many others are in that number.

Four congregations in the country can cooperate and give a preacher a reasonable living with what he can make at home, and the preacher can build up these congregations by preaching monthly to them, if the brethren will labor with him.

There are ten congregations in this (Pike) County and I think only four of them are having regular preaching. There are ten congregations in Howard County, and I don't think any of them have had regular preaching all this year. Seven congregations in Hempstead County, and I think only one is having regular preaching. Six Churches of Christ in Nevada County, and I think only two have regular preaching. If these



counties are a fair sample of the State, we need a hundred preachers or more to preach to the churches and mission points that are having no preaching. If the churches would cooperate with the preachers and with each other, this work could be accomplished.

How many preachers in Arkansas will accept work of this kind? How many churches will go to work and try to locate a preacher somewhere near and have him to preach the gospel all over their community?

Someone will say that the preacher will starve out preaching in that way. I think not. I have been doing that kind of work twenty-six years and have not starved out yet. All of these years I have lived on a farm. I have preached for congregations and mission points on Sunday through the winter and spring and held protracted meetings through the summer and fall. I have not kept a memorandum of the number I have baptized or the number of congregations I have helped to build up but I have baptized a goodly number each year and helped to build several congregations. I do not mention my work with any degree of boasting but just to illustrate the work of the country preacher. I have a very large family and none of them have been hungry but what there was something at home for them to eat, and my wife has been successful in teaching them the right way, to the extent that all of them but the three small ones are members of the Church of Christ, and none of them swear, drink whiskey, or use tobacco. I think country environments have helped some along those lines.

Brother Copeland was a living example of the type of preacher he described in the article above. He was truly a missionary to the country folk of Pike County, Nevada County, Hempstead County, Howard County, particularly, and to many other places scattered throughout Arkansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Texas.

#### *Mission Work in Hempstead County*

One good example of Jady's work as a country preacher is his work at Liberty Hill and Crank's School House in Hempstead County. These places are located on Highway 29, south of Hope, Arkansas.

Jady had been going to Liberty Hill for some time for monthly preaching appointments when in October, 1914, he skipped an appointment. When he came the following month, he announced the birth of his and Georgia's ninth and tenth children: the twins, who were born October 12, 1914. Troy Aslin and Mrs. Aslin, who was Arrie Beard, recalled this incident.

Troy and Arrie, who were born in 1901 and 1902, took great delight in relating their memories about Brother Copeland. They both remember him from their childhood. They both attended church services at Liberty Hill as children; both were baptized by Brother Copeland, and they were married by him in 1919.

They remember him as "a wonderful, wonderful man." The young people of the community liked Brother Copeland. Some who were not members of the church went to hear him preach. Mr. and Mrs. Aslin said that the young people liked Brother Copeland because he liked young people, was interested in them, and was friendly with them. A similar comment was made by a nephew who grew up in Pleasant Home community where Brother Copeland lived. Guy Copeland said, "I do remember he was respected more by the teenagers than the other older people were because he was always sympathetic, tolerant, and understanding, and very kind to them."

Arrie (Beard) Aslin's father was Tom Beard. She remembers her father and Brother Copeland sitting on the porch in the afternoons talking and laughing. Brother Copeland laughed heartily and often. He was witty and cheerful, but never sarcastic. His sense of humor was objective; that is, he never laughed at another person's expense. In spite of hardships and occasional tragedy, the Copeland family has always been one of the happiest anywhere. Sallie House Copeland, who married Felix's son, Homer, wrote: "I visited in their home a lot in my



'teen years, and marveled at their fine family, all the children . . . seemed so happy."

In later years the church spread from Liberty Hill to the Crank School community, primarily because of the influence Brother Copeland had through one man—Edgar Lafferty. The first gospel meeting was begun at Crank's School House the Saturday night before the fourth Sunday of July, 1923. Brother Lafferty had met Brother Copeland four years earlier, at Liberty Hill.

Brother Lafferty said, "I did not get acquainted with Brother Copeland on purpose. Our association had its beginning at a time when I really didn't want to be associated with men like him at all." He explained that he met Brother Copeland because of his interest in Eunice Starnes.

Brother Lafferty said that on Saturday night before Easter Sunday, 1919, he was at a party where he met a number of young people he had not known before. Among them was a girl, Eunice Starnes, whom Brother Lafferty became interested in.

"The next day, I found out they were having what I called a 'Campbellite' Sunday school at Liberty Hill." Eunice lived in front of the place and attended regularly; so, Brother Lafferty said, "I decided it was about time for me to start going to Sunday School."

The next afternoon he went to Liberty Hill, and on that particular afternoon Brother Copeland had an appointment to preach. "And that's the first time I met Brother Copeland."

So Edgar Lafferty began attending worship services at Liberty Hill. After he and Eunice were married they attended regularly, and Brother Copeland preached there one Sunday each month. Finally, he became a member of the church.

A short time after he became a Christian, Brother Lafferty began thinking about how he could get Brother

Copeland into his home community to teach the people there. He wondered how he could do it. In talking with him, he said, "Brother Copeland, I believe the people in my country are honest, I believe they've been just like me—misled. If you could come to that part of the country and preach, I believe that we could build a congregation there."

Brother Lafferty said he did not ask how much they could pay or how many people would be there. His reply was, "Brother Lafferty, you *can* get me into your community."

Arrangements were made for a meeting beginning Saturday night before the fourth Sunday in July, 1923. But this created a problem for Brother Lafferty: Who would introduce the new preacher in a new community on the first night of the meeting?

"I remember Brother Copeland and I were going in a wagon—a two-horse, iron-wheeled wagon—down the highway." When he finally got up enough courage to mention it, he said, "Brother Copeland, you expect someone to introduce you tonight?" He saw immediately what kind of predicament Brother Lafferty was in; Brother Lafferty had never spoken before an audience and the thought of it frightened him. Brother Copeland said, "Brother Lafferty, you furnish the grub, and I'll do the talking." That lifted a load from Brother Lafferty, he said.

There were only four members of the church in that community: the two Lafferty brothers and their wives. Large crowds attended that first meeting at Crank's School House. Only two people obeyed the gospel during the meeting and Brother Lafferty was discouraged. However, Brother Copeland suggested that they should not become discouraged. So, they made arrangements for him to return for another meeting the following year.

During the second meeting, thirteen people were baptized, including two of Edgar Lafferty's sisters. The group then began meeting each week at Crank's School House for worship. For several years Brother Copeland held meetings each year. Eventually there were about one hundred members of the church meeting at Crank's School House.

Brother Copeland wrote in the *Gospel Light*, February 1, 1931, about his work at Crank's School House:

This is the place where Brother C. R. Nichol met Elder Ben M. Bogard in debate in the fall of 1928. Brother Nichol held up the truth in a way that it had a telling effect, and so the work continues to grow.

I have been preaching twenty-five years. I have baptized several hundred people and assisted in establishing a number of churches, but I think I have never found any brethren more zealous, learn faster, or come nearer living up to their duty than George and Edgar Lafferty according to their opportunities. Brother Jeff Reese and also Brother John G. Reese have held meetings there with good results, and are held in high esteem by the brethren.

To illustrate how Brother Copeland's influence spread from that community, Brother Lafferty mentioned some specific examples. Luther Fambrough, who lived in West Texas, near Snyder, heard Brother Copeland preach at Crank's School House. He made arrangements to have him hold a meeting near Snyder, and a congregation was established there.

Edgar's brother moved to Chicot County, Arkansas, and helped build up a congregation at Lake Village.

Brother Copeland was asked to conduct a series of meetings at Midway, eight miles south of Crank's School House in Lafayette County. A congregation was established there. The congregation at Crank's School House later built a new building one quarter mile away and called it Central.

The members of that congregation who lived in the Evening Shade community decided to build a new building at Evening Shade. Brother Lafferty emphasized the fact that there was no strife or division, but that the church was growing and new congregations were being established. He also stressed the idea that these developments were traceable directly to the efforts and influence of J. A. Copeland.

Brother Copeland preached and held meetings throughout Hempstead County and parts of Lafayette County, as well as Pike County, Nevada County, Howard County, and others. If the facts were available, it could be shown that his influence spread in each community in much the same way it was described by Brother Edgar Lafferty in talking about Crank's School House and Liberty Hill.

#### *Work With the Church at Hopper*

Another community that felt the influence of Brother Copeland was Hopper, which is located about ten or twelve miles west of Glenwood, in Montgomery County. Brother Fay Bohannon, who has known Brother Copeland since he can remember, wrote that "the Hopper community is 'Copeland Country.' The lasting impression which your grandfather made contributes to the welcome sound of the Copeland name today."

The church register containing the record of Hopper's earlier years was lost. Brother Bohannon surveyed the active members of the congregation in 1972, and established from the information gathered that Brother Copeland held meetings in which there were baptisms in 1924, 1925, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1932, 1934, 1943, and 1945. "I am sure," he continued, "there were other meetings in which there were baptisms, but we had no members attending church that were in attendance or gave us that information. He held a short meeting over the week-end, some-

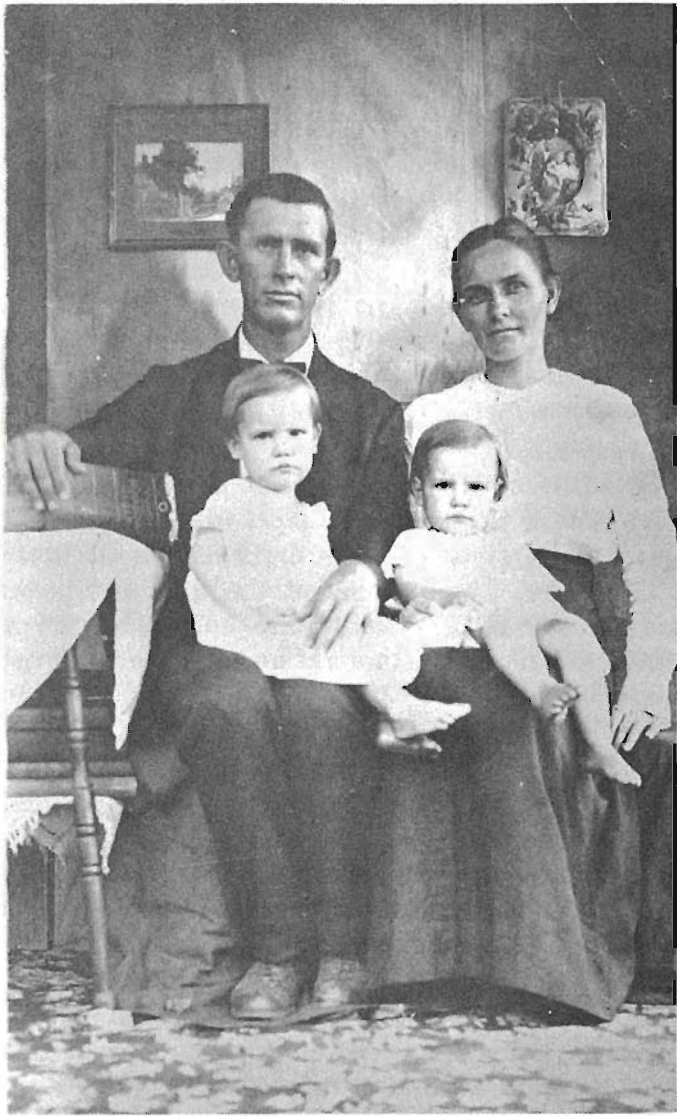
time between July 1953 and his death. . . . He and Sister Copeland had driven up from Delight in a relatively new Plymouth automobile. We were pleased that he had good transportation in his old age. In the early days he rode the train to Caddo Gap and someone from the community would meet him there and drive him to Hopper, which is six miles away in a westerly direction."

It may be added that in earlier times, beyond the reach of Brother Bohannon's memory, that Brother Copeland rode a horse from Pleasant Home to Hopper to keep his appointments. Following are some of the specific incidents recalled by Brother Bohannon:

"I remember the baptizing of 1929. (I confirmed the time by a person who was baptized and is now one of the elders.) It was the largest group to be baptized that I had ever seen. It was on the creek at the old sawdust pile. Of course, I was young at the time and it was a Sunday afternoon, a beautiful day, and he had so many candidates, I suppose I thought he would never get them all baptized.

"During the early thirties when the economy was so poor, I recall my father telling how they paid him for the meeting. As I recall they had less than \$10.00 in cash to pay him. To supplement this, they brought him canned goods, sorghum molasses, etc. Those were rough times but my father indicated that Brother Copeland was well pleased with what they gave him.

"Brother Copeland probably had more influence on the church than any other preacher that worked in the community. I say this from the point of view in getting the membership grounded in the truth," Brother Bohannon wrote. He also mentioned Brother John F. Reese and a Brother Thompson who preached before Brother Bohannon's time, and concluded, "The church at Hopper has much for which to thank these great men."



J. A. and Georgia Copeland and the twins, Floy and Joy  
About 1915

## CHAPTER VI

# Life at Pleasant Home

### *Building a School*

The year 1914 was a very busy year for Jady. During that year he preached once each month at Delight, a congregation about ten miles away that had about sixty-five members at that time. The records show that the Delight church paid him as much as \$6.20 one Sunday. Usually, however, it was \$3.00 or \$4.00 during that year. Also, during that year Jady was going to Liberty Hill, south of Hope, to preach once each month. He was engaged, as usual, in evangelistic meetings during the summer months. There were eight children at home, ranging from fourteen years of age to one. In October of that year the twins were born, making ten.

Jady had long recognized the importance of education. He was interested in improving the educational opportunities of the young people in the Pleasant Home, Hickory Plains, and Brock Springs communities.

For many years there had been a one-room school at Hickory Plains. It had been built in about 1882 or 1883, soon after the settlers began home-steading land in that section. There was a need for a new school building that was more centrally located. The Brock Springs school house was located about two and one-half miles south of Hickory Plains on the Murfreesboro road. There had been talk for some time about consolidating the two

schools. Pleasant Home was between the two, closer to Hickory Plains.

As a result of reading about Mar's Hill Academy, the Bible school at Florence, Alabama, built by T. B. Larimore, Jady dreamed of a complete high school where students could study Bible as a regular part of the curriculum. Hickory Plains school had the equivalent of seventh or eighth grade only.

Jady offered to build a school building on his own land if the people would support the combined schools and permit Bible to be taught. Many of the people in the surrounding communities were members of the church, and at first accepted the idea of a "subscription" school that included Bible in the curriculum. Jady's younger brother, Alvin, had a good education for that day and time; Jady hoped to get him to teach the high school students. He had the reputation of being an excellent teacher.

The new building was begun in the spring and was completed in time for the 1914 fall term. It was located about four hundred yards from the home place, between there and the Pleasant Home church house which was about one-quarter mile east of the home place. It was a two-room, frame building.

Alvin was teaching at McNab school in Hempstead County. He had already contracted to teach there during the 1914-1915 school term, but he "begged off" to help with the new school at Pleasant Home. That year Jady taught the younger children and Alvin taught the older ones. Alvin stayed only one year. The next year Leonard Stark, who married Jady's youngest sister, Bessie, taught the older students. The third year, 1916-1917, Sallie House and Charlie Copeland taught.

The school was discontinued after three years. Some of the parents of the Hickory Plains community complained that their children had to walk too far to Pleas-



ant Home. However, there may have been other reasons for the opposition; not all the families were members of the church, and some who were may have had negative feelings toward such a noble endeavor.

An interesting incident, which illustrates the reasonableness and good judgment Jady had, took place during the 1916-1917 school term. Charlie Copeland, the teacher, was concerned because some of the older boys had been smoking at school. On the night the school board met to discuss what should be done, some of the boys listened outside the window. Jordan Roberts, Homer Copeland, Stanley Copeland, and Lawrence Meyers were the students. Among the school board members were Warner House, Dave Beavert, H. E. McKibbon, J. A. Copeland, and a Mr. Lambert. Charlie Copeland, the teacher, was also there.

Mr. McKibbon wanted the board to pass a rule which would "prohibit any student from smoking at school, on the way to school, or on the way home from school." Jady realized that it would be impossible to enforce such a rule; he suggested that they prohibit smoking "on the school ground," and define the area of the school ground. Across the road, for example, would not be "on the school ground."

The next day at recess, the students were walking back from the well where they had gone to get drinking water. Jordan Roberts and Lawrence Meyers were smoking as they walked down the road. When the teacher told them of the new rule against smoking, they told him they were not "on the school ground."

In addition to his good judgment, Brother Copeland was unusually calm and patient. Mae (Roberts) Womack, who knew him all her life, wrote: "I never saw him when he seemed disturbed or worried." One of his daughters said, "I do not recall ever seeing him angry." Another wrote: "He never spoke on the spur of the moment; he

always thought carefully about anything before he gave his opinion or answer." Oleva, without knowing Vida had written the preceding statement, wrote, "Papa was never hasty in words, answers, or decisions. If one were asking his opinion or advice on a thing, he never gave it without first thinking it over carefully or praying about it." Charlene (Roberts) Henry, a granddaughter who lived with the Copelands for a time, describes him as "calm, slow to pass judgment."

### *Temporary Move: 1920*

Jady had been going to congregations near Prescott to preach for a number of years. He preached at Ward's Chapel as far back as 1908. Lillard Billingsley remembers his father meeting the train at Prescott to pick up Brother Copeland and bringing him to their house. One extremely cold Sunday in December, 1908, no one met him at Prescott because they thought he would not come, since it was so cold. But he came; he got a ride out to the Billingsley's house on a neighbor's load of hay. Lillard remembers Brother Copeland arriving, getting off the load of hay, nearly frozen in the bitter cold.

In 1919 a small group of Christians began meeting each Sunday at Sneed's school house, eight miles north of Prescott. Brother Copeland preached for them and became closely associated with the Harris family and others in the group.

Several important events took place in 1920 in the Copeland family. Oleva was born January 9, 1920. A few weeks later Willie was married to Jordan Roberts, on February 5. And, the family made a temporary move that year. Jady decided to make a crop that year on some land owned by Mr. Harris, near Prescott. He had bought a mule, and other debts made it necessary to make a cotton crop. Cotton was the "cash" crop at that time, and the price was up. On the better farm land near

the Little Missouri River, and with the boys big enough to help, they hoped to make enough to pay off the debts.

In early March Sweeney, who was almost 13 years old, went with his father one Friday to haul some plows and tools to the Harris place. Jady was to preach at Sneed's school house that week-end, so they decided to move some things while he was going. They also took the geese, with strips of wood nailed across the wagon bed to make a "cage" for the geese.

They crossed the Little Missouri River at Bowen on Mr. May's ferry. When they crossed the old river the water was so high that the wagon bed was filled with water. They opened the end-gate to let the water out, and the water rushing out of the wagon bed washed the geese out, too. The next hour or so was spent chasing geese all over the river bottoms! Finally, all but one goose was captured.

Sweeney and his father spent the night with Mr. Harris and worked in the garden on Saturday. While Sweeney was plowing the garden and Jady was cleaning off a fence-row, he heard his father speak to someone. Sweeney turned and was startled to see, standing very close, a black man with snow-white hair. "Uncle Kaze" was to be one of their new neighbors on the Harris farm.

During the summer and fall of 1920, the presence of Brother Copeland and his family led to an increased interest in the work of the church. The members of the congregation meeting at Sneed's school house began talking about building a place of worship. Brother Copeland preached in a meeting held under a brush arbor on the hill at the Kay Cemetery, five miles north of Prescott. Since several of the families lived in and around that community, plans were made to build a church house there. In the fall of 1920 the new building was begun. Brother Copeland was given the honor of selecting a name for the new meeting place. He

suggested Pleasant Hill for its name, and all agreed that it was appropriate.

After more than half a year of work and worship with the people at Pleasant Hill, the Copeland family had established some ties there which would eventually lead to their moving to that community.

They made a good crop that year, paid off their debts, and moved back home that fall after the crops were gathered. Some members of the family had malaria that summer and fall; they assumed that the malaria was the result of living near the river where there were many mosquitoes.

Back home, the family soon settled into the familiar routine of farm living. On a typical day in winter Jady was the first one up in the morning, to build fires before waking the others. He would always help with breakfast; he enjoyed helping in the kitchen. And he was a hearty eater, never complaining about the food or how it was prepared. Before breakfast was ready Jady would make the rounds awaking all the children. The entire family gathered at the table for a prayer of thanks before eating breakfast. After breakfast the school-age children prepared for school, leaving in time to walk the three-quarters of a mile before time for "books."

After the morning chores were done, Jady worked in the field or woods, or at whatever task was to be done that day. In his prime Jady was a strong man physically; he was five feet, ten inches tall, and usually weighed about one hundred and eighty pounds. He enjoyed work and created in his children a desire for work.

Jady had an unusually effective way of motivating his children. The "how" is not easily defined, however. Vida wrote, "Papa knew how to get us to work and not mind it so much. For instance, if we were picking cotton he would have us racing to see who could pick a hundred

bolts first. He would make a game of it." His unique ability to motivate them is seen in all areas of the lives of his children. Floy wrote, "I don't know how Papa gained the confidence, respect, and devotion of each of his children as he did unless it was because of the life that he lived. He lived what he taught. He set the right example before us. He was proud of his family and showed us that he had confidence in us. He was always willing to help us. We trusted Papa's judgment in everything. We always wanted his opinion in all of our decisions."

At times, childish fears were instantly dispelled by a single sentence from their father. For example, when Ordis was about six years old, he was disturbed one day by seeing the moon in the daytime. Until then he had assumed that the moon was visible only at night. He rushed to his father, "Papa, where is the moon supposed to be right now?" To this day Ordis remembers the relief he felt when, without interrupting what he was doing, his father said, "Son, wherever it is, that's where it's supposed to be."

All who knew Brother Copeland remember how he loved children. His own children fondly recall the many ways in which he demonstrated his love for them. Floy wrote: "I remember how he would play and romp with us. Another early memory was the sack of candy he would bring home when he came in from a preaching trip or just a trip to town. We would all go out to meet him and as he greeted us he would pull the bag of peppermint sticks from his pocket and pass it around, and then hand the bag to the youngest. The 'little' one got to hold the bag, but there was enough candy for all of us to have some. We sat and ate candy while we listened to a report of Papa's trip."

Elsie said, "He delighted in doing things to please his children if it was the best thing for them." And they all remember how he showed interest in their school work

and encouraged them by helping them with their homework.

Brother Copeland loved to help care for the babies. One of the most pleasant memories the older children have is of their father rocking the babies to sleep while singing again and again the six verses and chorus of the song "Deliverance Will Come."

"I saw a way-worn trav'ler, in tattered garments clad,  
And struggling up the mountain, it seem'd that he was sad;  
His back was laden heavy, his strength was almost gone,  
Yet he shouted as he journeyed, Deliverance Will Come!

Then palms of victory, crowns of Glory, Palms of Victory . . .  
I shall bear!"

The relationship Brother Copeland had with his own children included his manner of teaching them self-discipline. He ignored their minor violations of appropriate conduct, saying nothing until their behavior really required correction. Then, with firmness without emotion, he corrected them. Joy wrote: "Papa never fussed at his children nor criticized them. He never told us but once to do or not to do a thing—he didn't have to."

Although he was very successful, with the help of Sister Copeland, in training his own children, he never tried to tell other people how to raise their children. On one occasion both his wisdom and sense of humor were demonstrated when a parent asked his advice on rearing her children. Hazel Sullivan, Pierce Sullivan's wife, at Willisville, asked Brother Copeland after church one day, "Brother Copeland, I know that you and Sister Copeland have done well in rearing your own children. Can you give me some advice on training mine?"

"No, I can't," Brother Copeland said, "but I can tell you someone who can."

"Who,?" Mrs. Sullivan asked eagerly.

"Ask someone who has never raised any children," Brother Copeland answered with a smile.

As the typical day began with prayer, so it ended. "One of my fondest memories in early childhood," Floy wrote, "was our family devotional. After the supper dishes were done, we all gathered around the fireplace and Papa read from either the Bible or a Bible story book. Then he would lead us in prayer. This was before we started our school homework." In good times and bad, they lived with a realization that God was always near.

### *Serious Illness: 1922*

The Copeland family experienced a crisis in the spring of 1922. Vida had been visiting her friend, Hattie Harris, and the Ike Harris family at Pleasant Hill, near Prescott. Jady preached at Sneed's school house the week-end of February 26, 1922. Since Vida had planned to return with him on Monday, Jady went in the wagon. Usually, he went by train from Highland to Prescott and someone would meet him there.

During the night Sunday night, before the trip home on Monday, Vida became sick. She was really too sick to travel Monday morning, but after she and her father discussed it, they decided that they must start home. Soon after breakfast Jady and Mr. Harris harnessed the horses and hitched them to the wagon. Jady told them that they needed to get an early start.

It was a long, long trip for Vida. She was aching all over with pain which only the flu can cause. By the time they reached Pleasant Home, Vida was really suffering, and had a high fever. She went to bed immediately.

At that time, Ruth and Willie were married and away from home. Elsie was the oldest child at home; she was 20 years old and was teaching school at the Old Hickory Plains school that winter. Oleva, the baby, was two years old, and Grandma Watkins, Georgia's mother, was living

with the family. All together there were thirteen living in the house at that time.

During the weeks that followed, each member of the family had the flu except Elsie, Sweeney, Georgia, and Grandma Watkins. Although Vida was very will, the one who became most seriously ill was Jady. In fact, he became dangerously ill before he began to improve.

The members of the family were not all sick at the same time, and some were not very ill, but expected to be. After a few days in bed, most of them were well enough to resume their normal activities. Jady, however, became more seriously ill as the days went by. After a week he was not any better. During the second week they sent for the doctor. Dr. Roberts came from Murfreesboro, but did not, at first, realize how weak Jady was. The entire family had always been strong and healthy; they seldom sent for him except when it was time for a baby to be born. But Jady had, over a period of several years, been working at a pace which brought him to a point of physical and mental exhaustion.

The second time Dr. Roberts came he recognized that Jady was very nervous and was mentally exhausted as well as being seriously ill with the flu; he had reached a crisis point. He instructed the family that Jady must have quiet and rest. In a household of thirteen people, that was not easy to accomplish. Lem, Jady's brother, and other neighbors had been taking turns sitting with Jady each night. Sweeney was working in the fields each day, breaking the land with a turning plow to prepare for the spring planting. Elsie took the responsibility for the milking and churning. Since Georgia was to have another baby in about four or five months, Elsie and Grandma Watkins did much of the cooking and housework. With Jady in bed, and two or three of the children sick at the same time, they were kept very busy! Also, there were the visitors who came to help care for the sick. They had to eat, too.



For more than a week things had gone from bad to worse. On Tuesday morning, March 14, the same day that the doctor told the family that Jady had to have quiet and rest, Jady became convinced that he would not live. He sent for all those present to come to his bedside. In very feeble tones he told them he would not be with them much longer, and that he wanted to see them and say a few words. His words were spoken so softly that Sweeney, who was standing at the foot of the bed and whose hearing was not good, did not understand anything his father said. As he spoke of his departure, Jady said, "I'm not afraid to face the judgment for what I have preached. If only I have lived like I have preached to others, I will be all right."

Never before had this family experienced such a scene. Jady was 41 years old, and had never been seriously ill before. For the younger children, the meaning of this event was incomprehensible. For the older ones, it was like a sad dream. They felt that it could not be real! They could not imagine their future without Papa.

Willie and Jordan, who had one baby, Evelyn, lived nearby on the Hot Springs road. Ruth and Langley lived up in the mountains at the time, where Langley worked on the "grade," helping build a railroad. When the family realized that Jady was dangerously ill, they had sent for Ruth and Langley to come. As soon as the messenger arrived, Ruth began preparing to go. She had three children, Clauzelle, Copeland, and Audy, the baby, less than a year old. They wasted no time going to the home place. When they arrived, Mrs. Beavert met them outside and told them that Jady was very sick and that he did not think he would live. She warned Ruth not to cry in her father's presence. When they entered the room Jady himself began to cry. Ruth could not hide her emotion; she quickly left the room. When she went into the kitchen she found Grandma Watkins there, crying

also. In addition to Jady's condition, Grandma Watkins told Ruth that she had received word that very day that Harmon, Georgia's brother and Ruth's uncle, had been killed the day before in a tornado in Oklahoma.

Jady's brother, Zeta, lived at Murfreesboro. Evidently Dr. Roberts had seen Zeta when he returned from Jady's house and told Zeta what the situation was. Shortly thereafter, Zeta arrived on the scene and "took over," so to speak. He got the family together in a room away from Jady and told them what the doctor had said, that Jady must have quiet and rest or he would not live. He told the older boys to take off their heavy shoes while in the house. He moved the striking clock out of the room where Jady was, to the kitchen. Outside Jady's window, the geese spent their time making their terrible noise. Zeta had the boys help him drive the geese to a pasture back of the barn, and told the boys to see that they stayed there, away from the house.


Zeta told Lem and the other visitors that they could go home. When the doctor talked with Zeta, he suggested that he give Jady a "toddy" that night. Although alcohol was as foreign to that household as Chinese food, Zeta managed to find the necessary ingredients to fix the "toddy." He gave it to Jady, who was not strong enough to resist or argue about it. Zeta gave strict orders that no one was to enter the room. He would stay with Jady, and if he needed anything, Zeta would come out to get it. Nobody was to come in for any reason! Everyone else went to bed.

With the quiet and the relaxing effect of the "toddy," Jady went to sleep and slept better that night than he had in more than a week. The next morning he was much improved. Ruth said she had never seen a person change so much in such a short time. The next day, when he was feeling much better, Jady remarked that he had drunk more whiskey in the "toddy" than in all his life before that. Zeta, recognizing that Jady was feeling well enough

for his sense of humor to return, said, "Well, Jady, the grand jury meets next week; we will see what can be done about that."

For the next several days Zeta continued to maintain control of the situation and Jady continued to improve. The spark of life had been revived in Jady. The family knew he was feeling much better when he began talking about the spring planting. He sent for Langley and told him that he wanted him to plant his potatoes; it was time, and Jady said that it would be a good day for planting. Sweeney had been getting the land ready, and Jady knew he would not be able to help with the planting for some time. Langley, of course, was happy to plant them for him.

Jady's children look back on this event as one of the crisis times in their lives. But like many crises, it brought the family closer together. It demonstrated to them that their father was willing to face death, but more important, that he had the courage to live. They knew, as they know now, that this triumph was possible only because he had, for all those years, lived in the presence of God.





Clayton Copeland  
1912-1925

## CHAPTER VII

# The Family Circle Broken

Jady was 43 years old in 1924 when they left the home community, never to live there again. The three oldest daughters, Ruth, Elsie, and Willie, were married by that time, so there were ten children at home. The youngest, Jady Wilson, was two years old. They had lived in and around the Pleasant Home community all their lives, except for short periods of time. Their stay of a year and a half at Center Point had been the longest time they had lived away from Pleasant Home.

The community had changed a great deal since Jady and Georgia were school children at Hickory Plains. Most of the land had been homesteaded by 1900; the community had grown steadily. Through the years families moved in and some moved out. During and after World War I people moved away to find work. Several of Jady's relatives had moved to Little Rock or Texarkana. Some, including Georgia's brother, Alto, had moved to Oklahoma.

The mood of the entire nation was changing; economic prosperity influenced the lives of almost everyone. Conditions changed, even in this rural community in southwest Arkansas.

The reader of today, knowing of the changing social conditions in our nation at that period in our history, can imagine that some of those changes were disturbing to

people like Jady Copeland. A new generation had grown up in the Pleasant Home community. The declining interest in religion and spiritual values must have been distressing for Jady.

During the summer of 1924, Brother Copeland held a meeting at Pleasant Hill, near Prescott, where they had lived for six months in 1920. While there, the church was "more fully set in order, and elders and deacons were appointed. W. P. Buchanan, H. A. Buchanan, and J. J. Delaney were the first elders, and R. C. Harris, T. W. Morrow, and Byrd Tippett were the first deacons." They persuaded Brother Copeland to move to their community.

In the fall of 1924 the family moved to Pleasant Hill. The potential for growth in the churches in that area was good. He had, of course, developed many friendships in Nevada County through the years. And, living closer to the railroad would be more convenient, since Jady frequently traveled by railway to reach his preaching appointments.

Ruth and Langley had agreed to move into the house on the home place and look after things there. They had three children at that time. A year later, in 1925, Jady sold the place to his brother, Zeta.

Three men from Pleasant Hill, Ike Harris, Clabe Harris, and a Brother McKinnon, went to Pleasant Home with their wagons to help move the family. Some of the children spent the night with neighbors, since most of the household goods were packed and ready to be loaded. Joy and Floy, who were ten years old, spent the night with Mr. and Mrs. Beavert. The next morning when they got back, the wagons were loaded and last-minute preparations were being made to leave.

Georgia had prepared a picnic lunch for the family and the men who came to help them move. It was an all-day trip, approximately twenty-two miles from Pleas-



ant Home to Pleasant Hill. Approximately half way to their destination, about a mile out of Delight, they stopped for lunch.

The house they were to move into at Pleasant Hill was occupied and would not be vacant for about two or three weeks. The Copeland family moved into an old house on the Mauldin place temporarily. When their house on the highway was vacated they moved into it. The house was too small, but no addition was made until a year later.

A very tragic event was to occur while the Copelands lived at Pleasant Hill.

### *Clayton's Fatal Accident*

The family circle was broken for the first time by a tragic event which occurred in the summer of 1925. Clayton, who was twelve and one-half years old, was injured in an accident and died two days later. The following article appeared in the *Nevada County Picayune*, Thursday, July 9, 1925:

#### **BOY FATALLY HURT BY FALL FROM FRIGHTENED PONY**

Clayton Copeland, twelve year old son of Rev. and Mrs. J. A. Copeland, Route 5, was severely injured last Sunday, when a pony he was riding became frightened and threw him against a large gum root. He was rendered unconscious, and brought to Prescott for treatment. He died Tuesday night.

Clayton, although somewhat hard of hearing, was very alert and learned quickly and easily. He was an energetic boy who worked hard and played hard. His blue eyes sparkled as he smiled, the expression of a naturally lovable disposition.

The family had lived in the Pleasant Hill community less than a year. Brother Copeland was doing the

preaching in a gospel meeting during the first week of July. On Sunday, July 5, after the morning worship service, everyone stayed for "dinner on the ground." They met for another preaching service at 2:00 o'clock that afternoon. Many of the members had to return to their homes to feed the livestock, milk the cows, and take care of the usual chores before the night service.

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Latest picture of Clayton Copeland. Back row, left to right: Clayton, Chasteen Beavert, Estelle, Olestal Beavert; Middle row: Ordis, Joy, Clemie Beavert, Floy, Pauline Stevens; Front row: Elaine Cox and Oleva.

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Among Clayton's closest friends were his cousin, Hubert Delaney, and the two Smith brothers, Clovis (Tobe) and Loyce. After the afternoon preaching service, the four boys wanted to spend the rest of the afternoon together. The Smiths asked Clayton and Hubert to go home with them. When Clayton asked if he could go, his mother told him that the horses must be watered first. The four boys walked to the Copelands' house, which was near the church building. Hubert and Loyce waited



while Clayton and Tobe rode the horses to the usual watering place, a small stream which was down the hill behind the church building. Clayton rode "May," a young, spirited mare, while Tobe rode "Bess," the more gentle mare. They galloped down the path, filled with excitement as they talked about their plans for the afternoon.

Near the foot of the hill, just before they reached the branch, Clayton's mount suddenly darted to the left to take a path which left the main trail, a short-cut to the stream. Although Clayton was familiar with the path, and "Ole May" had taken that path before, he was surprised by the sudden turn, and fell from the horse. His head struck the root of a tree, and he was knocked unconscious. He never regained consciousness. He was taken to the home and a doctor was summoned immediately. Dr. Chastain from Prescott came and examined him.

Throughout the night Mrs. Neal McKinnon sat with Clayton, responding to his every groan and movement. During the night or early morning hours, as she was attending him, Mrs. McKinnon noticed that a large knot had formed behind Clayton's left ear. When the doctor came the next morning, she mentioned the knot she had found on the boy's head. Dr. Chastain examined it carefully and said immediately that Clayton must be taken to the hospital, that an operation might have to be performed.

The unconscious boy was taken as quickly as possible to the hospital at Prescott. His Aunt Clara Delaney and Mrs. McKinnon rode with him in the ambulance. All day Monday and Monday night the doctor and the nurses kept him under close observation. Dr. Chastain talked with Dr. Buchanan; they agreed that if Clayton was not better by Tuesday morning, they would operate. His only hope for survival, they reasoned with the family,

was to operate in order to relieve the pressure caused by the concussion. It was a risk worth taking.

With Dr. Buchanan assisting, Dr. Chastain operated Tuesday morning. But it was too late; there was too much damage for Clayton to recover. He died Tuesday night, July 7, 1925, at about eight o'clock. His body was moved to the Cornish Funeral Home in Prescott. Sweeney, by his own choice, sat with the body at the funeral home that night. Brother Clabe Harris of the Pleasant Hill community, Brother Lee Starnes, a preacher and friend of the family, and David Stuart, who later became Vida's husband, also stayed through that awful night.

Soon after the accident had happened, the three married daughters were called by telephone. Elsie and Ruth and their families lived at Pleasant Home; Willie and Jordan lived at Little Rock. Ruth and Langley arrived Tuesday.

The body was moved to the home at Pleasant Hill Wednesday morning. By that time a number of other relatives had arrived. Sweeney was awakened by his father about 1:00 o'clock Wednesday afternoon; he had been up all night Tuesday night. Jady told him that they had not been able to contact anyone at Pleasant Home by telephone. The funeral was planned for Thursday, at Pleasant Home, but none of the folks at Pleasant Home knew about it. The grave had to be dug and other preparations made. Sweeney had to make a trip on a horse to deliver the message.

Sweeney ate and got ready while his father saddled the mare. First, Sweeney planned to ride "Ole Bess," the steady one. At the last minute he changed his mind and told Jady to saddle "Ole May," the younger, faster mare Clayton had been riding when he fell. Sweeney rode at a steady gallop, occasionally slowing to a walk for a few minutes to allow "Ole May" to rest. Within about two

and one-half hours, he had completed the twenty-two mile trip to Pleasant Home. He went to the home place, unsaddled the mare and fed her, and walked down the hill to Mr. Beavert's house. With deep emotion Sweeney told their life-long neighbors of the tragedy. Sweeney's mission was then completed; Mr. Beavert assumed the responsibility for preparing for the funeral the next day.

Sweeney had not slept more than a few hours at a time since Saturday night; he was exhausted. Wednesday he slept all night. When he got to the church house Thursday, the grave was completed and all the preparations were made.

The small caravan of automobiles left Pleasant Hill about mid-morning Thursday for the funeral at Pleasant Home. Although it was several miles farther, they went by Okolona since that road had a good bridge across the Little Missouri River. Others joined the caravan at Delight, including Brother Brooks Stell. Clayton's body was transported in a panel truck provided by the funeral home. Since Ernest Jameson, the Funeral Director, did not know the way to Pleasant Home, A. E. McGuire rode with him to show him the way. Before they left, instructions were given the driver that they were to stop at Elsie's house about a mile and one-half before they would reach Pleasant Home. Elsie was in bed; her second child, James, had been born a few days earlier. Elsie and Dewey lived on the Burlison place, where Brother and Sister Copeland had lived the first year of their marriage.

When the caravan reached Dewey and Elsie's house, they all stopped. The men lifted the casket from the van and carried it into the house. The casket was opened so Elsie and her family could see the body. Comments were made about how natural Clayton looked, but how pale. He was wearing a new suit his father had bought after they learned that the funeral home did not have anything to fit a boy his age.

The funeral was conducted by Brother Lee Starnes and Brother Brooks Stell at 2:00 o'clock Thursday afternoon, July 9, 1925. It was an emotional experience the family never forgot. Fifty years later Ruth remembered that the song "Will the Circle be Unbroken?" was sung. No song could have been more appropriate.

Throughout the ordeal Jady maintained his composure except for two occasions when he wept openly and unashamedly. One of these times was when Zeta arrived at the home at Pleasant Hill on Wednesday and the other was when they arrived at Pleasant Home and he was met by his life-long friends and relatives.

Although the loss of a loved one so young and innocent was sad and difficult for them, the Copeland family had the advantage of a triumphant religious faith. They took comfort, therefore, in the blessed assurance of the scriptures in the Bible: "But I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope." (1 Thessalonians 4:13). They believed strongly in the idea expressed by Longfellow:

"Life is real, life is earnest,  
And the grave is not its goal.  
Dust thou art, to dust returneth,  
Was not spoken of the soul."

Thus, with faith in God, they looked to the future, knowing

"There is no death! What seems so is transition;  
This life of mortal breath  
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,  
Whose portal we call death."

—Longfellow.

The remaining circle of father, mother, and twelve children was not to be broken again for thirty years.

The Copeland family lived at Pleasant Hill only two years and approximately three months. During that time, the children attended school at "Rocky College," a rural community school east of Pleasant Hill. Homer Gentry, Miss Della Coffee, and Miss Eva Mosley were among the teachers at Rocky College during those two school years of 1924-25 and 1925-26.

Farming had always been a part of the family's way of life. While at Pleasant Hill, they raised the usual crops of corn and cotton. But in addition, for the first time ever, they raised watermelons for the market.

During the winter of 1925-1926 Jady remodeled the house at Pleasant Hill. It was located on the road just north of the new Pleasant Hill church house. Among his numerous skills, Brother Copeland was a good carpenter. He had not been trained in the trade, but because of his natural ability and interest, he had developed that skill through experience and necessity. Throughout the years, he built or helped to build and remodel several houses. There was, for him, a certain satisfaction in that kind of work; he was using a God-given talent to create something new and useful for his family. He also helped many others from time to time, in their building.

The move to Pleasant Hill was significant for a number of reasons, but perhaps it had more lasting effects upon Vida and Estelle than the other members of the family. They both married men who lived in that community; Pleasant Hill became home for them.



The J. A. Copeland family, Christmas, 1927. Back row, left to right: Langley House, Lavonne House, Ruth, Estelle, Nancy (Womack) Copeland, J. A., Jady Wilson, Georgia, Emma (Hardie) Watkins, Vida, Willie, Sweeney, Jordan Roberts; Second row: Clauzelle House, Copeland House, Audy House, Gilbert, Dewey Cox, Elsie, Ordis, Oleva, J. L. Roberts Jr., Charlene Roberts, Evelyn Roberts; Front row: James Cox, Bernie Lee Cox, Lynn Cox, Joy and Floy.

## CHAPTER VIII

# Delight and Tragedy

After two years at Pleasant Hill, the family moved again. As always, the possible good which could be accomplished in the work of the church was the primary factor upon which the decision was based. The church at Delight, one of the oldest congregations of the New Testament church in Arkansas, was having some problems at that time. Because many of the members knew and respected Brother J. A. Copeland, the leaders in the congregation believed that he could help to restore unity in the church. That was the basis of their plea for Brother Copeland to move to Delight.

Pleasant Hill held sad memories since Clayton's death a year and a half before. Two other circumstances also influenced his decision to accept the call of the Delight church. The opportunities were limited at Pleasant Hill for the children to have the kind of friendships needed for Christian growth. And there was a high school at Delight. So, in spite of the hardships it might cause the family, in the long run it would work out for the best.

The year 1927 was one of those unforgettable years. Lindberg flew to Paris; the Supreme Court finished mopping up Teapot Dome; Babe Ruth knocked sixty home runs; Coolidge "did not choose to run" again. People were reading *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and



humming "My Blue Heaven." The Marines landed in Nicaragua and China that year, and in the spring of 1927 floods ravaged the Mississippi Valley from Cairo, Illinois, to the Gulf of Mexico.

In Arkansas, the floods started in December 1926. The road and weather conditions, in fact, delayed the Copeland family's move. The rainfall in December broke the record in Arkansas. In Delight, almost six inches of rain fell during a twenty-four hour period Monday and Tuesday December 20-21. Streams reached the flood stage and delayed the trains as well as travel on the highways. The railroad bridge at Antoine, crossing the Antoine River, and the bridge crossing Wolf Creek at Delight were twisted out of line by the high water.

The following article was published in the *Pike County Tribune* on Friday, January 7, 1927:

#### J. A. COPELAND WILL MOVE HERE

Eld. J. A. Copeland, Christian evangelist, formerly of Pleasant Home community but for the past few years of near Prescott, has purchased the Mrs. J. D. Boyd farm near town and will move to the same as soon as road and weather conditions will permit. The Tribune joins Bro. Copeland's many friends of this community in welcoming him and his good family to our midst.

The home and farm they bought from Mrs. Sallie E. Boyd was located one mile west of Delight on the Murfreesboro road. The deed, filed in the county clerk's office at Murfreesboro on January 4, 1927, indicated that the total selling price for the eighty acres and the house was \$2,000. Eleven hundred dollars was paid at the time the deal was closed; the remaining \$900 was to be paid in three equal payments of \$300 each on November 15, 1927, November 15, 1928, and November 15, 1929.

The manner in which the move was made turned out to be a new and exciting experience for the entire family.



Jady rented a railroad boxcar at Prescott. On Saturday, January 8, 1927, they began hauling some of the things to the boxcar. The move was to be made on Monday, so they hauled only those things which would not be needed over the weekend.

Ruth and Langley went to Pleasant Hill that weekend. Some of the children, including Floy and Joy, went home with Ruth and Langley on Sunday afternoon. On Monday morning, the rest of the household goods, furniture, and even the livestock, were loaded on the boxcar for the move. While the train went by way of Gurdon and Antoine, to Delight, the family went in the car by Okolona. By the time Ruth, Langley and the children got to Delight from Pleasant Home, the furniture was being moved into the Boyd house where the family was to live.

At the time of the move to Delight, Sweeney was working at Little Rock. He had left after Christmas to be in Little Rock to start work the first of the year. Willie and Jordan lived at Little Rock, and Sweeney stayed with them while there.

Vida was teaching at Blevins that year, so she did not move with the family to Delight.

When the children entered school at Delight, there were some adjustments to be made. Never before had any of them attended such a large school. The *Pike County Tribune* reported, in August, 1926, that "owing to the continued growth of the school," the school board had decided to build another large room on the school building.

That school year, Mr. J. O. Kelly was superintendent and high school teacher. Nuel C. Crain was principal and high school teacher, and Miss Elise Reid taught seventh and eighth grades. In the elementary school, Miss Andrews taught fifth and sixth grades, Miss Addie Wade taught third and fourth grades, and Miss Nellie

Stark had the primary department. When school started, September 20, 1926, a total of 120 students enrolled, but quite a number were still out picking cotton.

Because of extra expenses that year, students were charged tuition for the first two months. The amount ranged from \$1.50 for first and second grades to \$3.50 each for those in high school.



J. A. and Georgia Copeland  
At Delight, about 1928

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In January, 1927, when the Copeland children enrolled at Delight, Gilbert and Estelle were in the eighth grade, Joy and Floy were in the fifth grade, and Ordis and Oleva were in the second grade. Jady Wilson was not old enough to be in school. Although some adjustments to the larger school were necessary, after they got acquainted the children were very happy at Delight. This was the first time any of the family had had a

chance to finish high school. Sweeney had attended high school at Prescott in the fall of 1924, but dropped out at mid-term to ease the financial strain on the family budget. Floy and Joy were to become the first high school graduates in the Copeland family.

Several important events took place in the Copeland family during the year 1929. It was an unstable time for everyone. The decade called "the roaring twenties" came to an end with a crash! Financial panic gripped the entire nation in the worst depression in its history. The situation was almost world-wide. The years of the Coolidge administration (1921-1928) witnessed expansion and inflation unknown in any country in the world before that time. Inflation brought the illusion of permanent prosperity. While financial activity continued at an unprecedented rate during the summer of 1929, industrial activity was slowing down. Agricultural depression, the result of falling prices for farm products and land, cost thousands of farmers their homes through mortgage foreclosure. Two-fifths of the farms in America were operated by tenant-farmers.

Under the Agricultural Marketing Act, signed by President Hoover in June, 1929, a Federal Farm Board was furnished a fund to establish marketing cooperatives. They loaned money to farmers who pledged their crops as security. After the depression hit, this did not work because prices quickly fell below the loan rate.

The stock market crash, in October, 1929, is usually considered the beginning of the "great depression." In 1932 stocks sold for about ten percent of their 1929 value. In Arkansas, cotton that had sold for as much as twenty cents a pound dropped to five cents. Land that had sold for forty dollars an acre sold for five dollars an acre. Corn was selling for twenty-five cents a bushel.

Other misfortunes came with the year 1929. The *Pike County Tribune* reported a flu epidemic at Delight in

January, 1929. The opening of school after the Christmas holidays was postponed until January 7. As members of the Copeland family discussed the seriousness of flu, their conversations went back to March, 1922, when Jady had almost died.

The Copeland family moved to Prescott in February of that year. The following article was published in the February 15 issue of the *Pike County Tribune*:

#### LOCAL PASTOR MOVES TO PRESCOTT

Elder J. A. Copeland and family, who recently purchased a home in Prescott, moved first of this week to make that their future home. Bro. Copeland will be pastor of the Prescott Christian Church for the ensuing year. The family's many friends here regret for them to leave this community. But our loss will be Prescott's gain.

But things did not work out that way. The home place at Delight had been sold to Curtis Hughes for \$2,500. Because he could not get a loan on the place for enough to pay for it, he had to let it go back. Since the Copelands were depending on getting the money from Mr. Hughes to pay for their place at Prescott, they had to move back to Delight. On March 18, exactly five weeks after their move to Prescott, they moved back.

Curtis Hughes was J. A. Copeland's brother-in-law; he married Nobia Copeland, Jady's younger sister. At the time Jady and his family returned from Prescott, Nobia was seriously ill; she died a short time later, in June, 1929. Because of her illness, Jady rented a house two miles north of Delight, on the Caddo Gap road. Nathan Lamb had moved to town and his house was vacant. Although he planned to sell the place later, he offered to rent it to the Copeland family temporarily.

They lived there all summer and made a crop on Mr. Lamb's land. It was a dry, hot summer, perhaps a forerunner to the worse drought to come in 1930. Some of the

children remember picking peas that had dried in the field. Among their neighbors while they lived in Mr. Lamb's house on the Caddo Gap road were Lincoln Lamb and his family, the Phillips family and the Thomassons.

Fate was to deal the Copeland family another tragic blow before the year ended. The house they lived in burned on November 22, 1929. The following article appeared in the *Pike County Tribune* on November 29:

"Fire originating from a defective flue last Friday morning about 9:00 o'clock destroyed the residence of Eld. and Mrs. J. A. Copeland, two miles north of here. Eld. and Mrs. Copeland had just left home shortly before the fire was discovered by nearby neighbors, who rushed to the house and saved a piano and a few bed clothes. All the other household goods, together with the family wearing apparel was burned up.

Volunteer firefighters of the town rushed to the scene of the fire, but too late to save anything except what was in the smokehouse.

The fire loss was estimated at about \$1,500.

That fall Estelle, Floy, Joy, Ordis, Oleva, and Jady Wilson were still at home. Ruth and her family, and Elsie and her family lived in the Pleasant Home community. Willie and Jordan lived at Little Rock. Sweeney was working at Hope; he moved from Prescott to Hope to become manager of Mr. Stripling's Number Three Store in March, 1929. He and Maude Brown were married on Wednesday, November 27, the week after the house burned. Vida taught at Hopper, near Glenwood, during the 1928-29 school year; she was married to David Stuart July 14, 1929. Gilbert went to work for Mr. Stripling in the store at Prescott that year.

After Nobia Hughes died, Jady agreed to sell Curtis Hughes twenty acres of land for him to build a house on, a few hundred yards east of the home place. After he had moved out of the Copeland house, Jady decided to

remodel the house before the family was moved back into it. During the fall, while they still lived in Mr. Lamb's house on the Caddo Gap road, they worked on their house. Each day after the children went to school, Jady and Georgia would go to work on the house. In addition to other changes, the roof was to be replaced with one not so steep. The Boyd house, originally built by Charlie Reid, had a very steep roof with a number of gables. Jady wanted to change that; not only would it improve the looks of the house, but also make it easier to repair the roof when necessary.

In November **they worked** steadily on the house, hoping to have it finished by Thanksgiving Day. While they had the roof **off and** before they got the new roof on, an unexpected early snow fell during the night of November 21. On Friday morning, November 22, Jady, Georgia, and Jady Wilson were working at the house, trying to sweep and shovel out the snow that had fallen in the ceiling, before it melted.

Jady Wilson, who was in the second grade at school, was not at school that morning because Miss Nellie's first and second graders were alternating mornings and afternoons. That week the second graders were going to school in the afternoons, the first graders in the mornings. The older Copeland children were all at school.

The fire was discovered by neighbors, Mr. Hall and Mr. Phillips. Silas Hall had recently rented the house where the Copelands were living. While waiting for the house to become vacant, he and his family were living in a small house nearby. When they moved to the smaller house, however, they moved their piano into the house where the Copelands were living so it would not have to be moved twice.

Mr. Hall and Mr. Phillips were moving the piano out of the burning house when another neighbor, Mr. Thomasson arrived. They saved the piano and the quilts

and sheets from one bed. While these men were moving the piano, someone called the telephone operator and told her to spread the word. Within a few minutes a number of men from Delight had rushed to the burning house. But it was too late!

Otsy May was in town; when she heard about the fire she hurried to the school to tell the Copeland children. The high school students attended a "pep rally" that morning; a football game was scheduled for that afternoon. Suddenly, while the students were moving to their next classes, excitement appeared. It spread as the word was passed from one to another. "Fire!" "Where?" "The Copelands' house!" Mrs. Bell, the English teacher, asked a boy who had his car at school to drive Floy and Joy to their home. By the time they got to the house, it had burned completely. The fire-fighters and spectators were already returning to Delight.

The young people from school then drove back to town and started to the other house where Brother and Sister Copeland were working. They met their parents on the way. Sister Copeland was terribly upset; she was crying "like someone had died." When the parents were told that the house was completely destroyed, Jady suggested that they go to Nathan Lamb's house. He knew that Georgia would be even more disturbed if they went immediately to see the ruins. That their meager belongings, accumulated through the years, were lying in smoldering ashes was a dreadful thought.

The Lamb family demonstrated true friendship and the true spirit of Christian brotherhood! Without hesitation they asked, they insisted, that the Copelands stay with them until their home was completed.

Many friends and neighbors in and around Delight, and throughout the country where the Copelands were known, demonstrated that same spirit. Clothing, house-



hold furnishings, and money were contributed by dozens of people. O. J. Phillips and Ralph Thomasson got in a truck and drove about the country collecting things for the Copeland family.

Nathan Lamb, who owned a cotton gin, contributed enough cotton to make four full-sized mattresses. Jady went to a second-hand furniture store at Hope and bought the necessary furnishings not contributed by friends and neighbors. He bought a new cookstove and a new sewing machin~~e~~. ✓

People's response to the Copelands' need demonstrated generosity beyond anyone's expectation. The intense gratitude, felt by the entire family, was expressed publicly in the following article, published in the *Pike County Tribune* on November 29, 1929:

#### CARD OF THANKS

We wish, as much as is in our power, to express our sincere thanks to the people of Delight and other communities for their kindness shown to us since our misfortune of losing our household goods by fire. We shall never forget the tender words of sympathy and the financial aid the people have given. We have received articles of clothing, bed clothes, and money, for which we are truly grateful. We especially thank those who showed so much interest in collecting those things for us. May the Lord's richest blessings rest upon you all is our prayer. Pray for us that we may be worthy of such blessings.

J. A. Copeland and family.

Very few people know that awful feeling of despair after their house and all they own have burned. The shock of the event made it seem unreal for the Copelands. Having never before experienced such a situation, the entire family found it hard to believe. The shock wore off with time, of course, but the hardship of losing all their belongings was felt for years. Often in the years that followed, some particular item would be mentioned and someone would say, "That was burned with the house in 1929."



Jady had been preaching for 25 years and was 48 years old when the house burned. Among the greatest losses, from his point of view, were the records of his preaching appointments and meetings, and the accumulation of his sermon outlines, notes, and reference books. He had, of course, a great deal of knowledge, especially of the Bible, as a result of those twenty-five years of study and experience preaching. In fact, his children say that a favorite pastime when they were growing up was to read a passage aloud from the New Testament to see if their father could quote the verse before and after it. To their delight, most of the time he could. His written records, however, and his lesson outlines were vitally important to him. Their loss in the fire was a blow to Jady. The anguish and heartache he felt was known to few. In later years Sister Copeland told of a particular time when she was awakened by Jady in the middle of the night. He was sitting on the side of the bed, in distress. When she asked him what was wrong, he moaned, "All of my sermons and notes and records are gone!"

But he never gave up! In the years that followed, he re-dedicated himself to studying the Bible and writing new lesson outlines. Oleva remembers that many nights when her father had difficulty sleeping, he would get up and study and read. Once again the firm conviction that "all things work together for good" led to triumph over a most difficult time.

In the years that followed, also, Brother Copeland's talents for serving others were to be expanded to include writing and editing.



J. A. and Georgia Copeland  
At Hope, 1940.

## CHAPTER IX

# The Gospel Light

In 1929 Grady Alexander, at 38 years of age, was a successful businessman and publisher of a county newspaper. He was conscientious in everything he did, and always wanted to do the right thing. Having a strong desire to serve the Lord to the best of his ability, he dreamed of establishing a gospel paper which would serve the members of the Lord's church throughout Arkansas and elsewhere.

J. A. Copeland had moved to Delight, and Brother Alexander approached Brother Copeland with the idea. He wanted Brother Copeland to assist him in the venture. Brother Copeland later wrote:

I did not encourage the matter, for I realized I was not an editor and I had known several papers to fail for the lack of finances and proper management.

About a year later, in 1930, Brother Alexander came to him with the same plea and convinced Brother Copeland that it would work. He agreed this time to help with the work.

Brother Copeland knew that Brother Alexander was a hard worker and a good manager. He had confidence in Brother Alexander; he had known him since childhood.

The decision was made to begin. The name selected for the paper was the *Gospel Light*. During the summer and fall of 1930 they spent much time planning the new paper. A great number of people became interested in the idea. There were, of course, many who believed that such an effort would surely fail. After all, many others had tried and failed. Some thought it foolish to attempt such a venture during the worst depression the nation had ever known.

But Brother Alexander had full confidence that it would succeed. In the first issue he wrote:

In accepting the business management and publication of the *Gospel Light*, which is being launched at Delight at this time not as a local paper, but as a state-wide publication, in the interest of the Churches of Christ throughout the state and adjoining states, we do so without any hesitation or question as to its ultimate outcome, its progress, or future prosperity and growth, because we have the utmost confidence in the ability of those who have pledged their support to the paper.

With the assurance of the support and patronage of a number of the strongest congregations, together with many of the ablest ministers in the brotherhood pledging their cooperation and services in the preparation of material for the paper, we have no hesitancy in placing our printing plant and our experience as a publisher at the disposal of the brotherhood for the publication of the *Gospel Light*.

A religious publication, like all publications, to continue and succeed, must have the support, cooperation and good will of all concerned—and the *Gospel Light* is no exception to this rule. It will be a part of the business policy of this paper from time to time to accept a limited amount of legitimate advertising, and without such we do not believe that a religious paper the size of the *Gospel Light* can be maintained with a fifty cents a year subscription price alone. This part of the paper's business policies will probably be criticized by some who are not familiar with the rise and down-fall of the many religious publications which have tried to run by the support of the subscriptions alone.

Brother Copeland talked with brethren about the paper in every congregation where he held meetings. He

found many people interested, and many promised to support the new paper.

Brother Alexander and Brother Copeland knew that in order to succeed they must have the support of some of the larger congregations of the church in Arkansas. Also, they must have articles written by men known and respected in the brotherhood. In an effort to gain the support needed and to get commitments from potential contributors, they visited a number of congregations and preachers in central and north Arkansas. The following article appeared in the first issue of the *Gospel Light*, which was published December 1, 1930:

#### COOPERATION IS ASSURED

On Sunday afternoon, November 9, the editor and publisher started on a tour of the Central and Northwest part of the state in the interest of the *Gospel Light*. We first visited with Brother Glenn E. Green of Little Rock. We reached there in time to hear him preach a fine sermon. Brother Green has been with the Fourth and State Street Church for about four years, and seems to be the right man for the place. The church has grown considerably since he has been laboring with it. He will be a regular contributor to the *Gospel Light*, and we are sure that his articles will be highly appreciated by the brethren.

On Monday morning we visited Brother J. C. Dawson at Conway. He was very busy but took time to talk with us about the *Gospel Light*, and assured us of his hearty cooperation. Brother Dawson impressed us as being an honest and zealous Christian and a good preacher. He will be a regular writer and worker for the paper.

We next went to Morrilton, and met that splendid brother, L. C. Sears, Dean of the Harding Christian College. Brother Sears seems to be a very fine man, and the boys and girls in school there are very fortunate in being in the care of, and trained by such men as Bros. Sears, Armstrong, Bell and Rhodes. The school is doing a great work in training boys and girls for usefulness.

The Harding Christian College will have a department in the *Gospel Light*, which will be filled each issue from that institution. We did not get to see Brother Armstrong as he was in Nashville, Tennessee.

We went from Morrilton to Fort Smith, arriving there about 8 p.m. Monday and found the brethren there in a meeting with Brother J. W. Brents of Muskogee, Oklahoma doing the preaching. Brother Brents seems to be a fine man, and we are told that he is an excellent preacher and writer. We were glad to secure him as a regular contributor to the **Gospel Light**. We found Brother Laird and Dr. Billingsley at church and talked to them about plans for the **Gospel Light**. They also assured us of their full cooperation in helping make the publication of the paper a success. Dr. Billingsley was the first paid-in-advance subscriber of the **Gospel Light**, and Brother Brents was the first field contributor to send in an article for the paper.

Brother Laird is president of the Arkansas Christian Home, and Dr. Billingsley is secretary and treasurer. They are very enthusiastic men, and are doing a great work caring for, educating and teaching those children the Bible. It is a pleasure to meet and associate with such men.

We went to Van Buren Monday night, and left there early Tuesday morning and stopped off at Morrilton, hoping to see Brothers Armstrong, Johnson, and others but the former had not returned from Nashville, Tennessee. We spent a few hours with Brother R. H. Johnson and his good wife, and enjoyed a good dinner in their home. They know how to make a preacher feel welcome.

Our time was limited and we did not visit the college in session, so we did not see Brothers Bell and Rhodes. We returned to Little Rock in the afternoon where the editor visited for the last time in this world my brother-in-law, Leonard Stark. And as we think of this visit our eyes are dimmed with tears, for a great and good man was he. About seventeen years have rolled around since he and the editor's sister married, and we have found him to be a faithful and sacrificing Christian.

We look forward to that visit with him on the other side, where no sad separations come.

We returned home Wednesday assured that the brethren were anxious to see the first number of the **Gospel Light**. It is the unanimous opinion of all that we need a good paper in Arkansas, and they convinced us that they are going to help make the **Gospel Light** a blessing to man wherever it goes.

At the beginning, the paper was four pages, published twice each month. Each page had three columns of

print, thirteen or fourteen inches high; the format was similar to that of a newspaper. The subscription price was fifty cents per year.

In an article appearing on the editorial page of the first issue, Brother Copeland explained the purposes and policies of the *Gospel Light*. The entire article is reproduced below:

### SALUTATORY

(By J. A. Copeland)

I believe we should be ready to give a reason for every undertaking of life. The Apostle Peter said: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you, a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Pet. 3:15).

Our reason for coming before the brotherhood with the *Gospel Light* is that we believe that it will help to advance the cause of Christ in Arkansas and elsewhere. We believe that the preachers and brethren in general ought to know more about each other, and the work the Churches of Christ are doing in Arkansas. Besides this, in a good Gospel paper many are taught the truths of the Bible that would not learn them otherwise. It enlarges our field of usefulness by giving an opportunity to preach the Gospel with pen as well as with tongue.

We are aware of the fact that many religious papers have started that did not last long, but we believe that with the conditions we have this paper can be financed without being a great burden on any one person.

Brother Grady Alexander, who is publisher and business manager of the *Gospel Light*, is an experienced newspaper man and publisher, and has succeeded in his work. He owns his home, office and a splendid printing plant, with which he has been printing a weekly paper for a number of years. He does not expect to discontinue his newspaper, but with very little added expense he can publish the *Gospel Light*.

We also understand the financial condition of the country at this time, but the paper is small and will be published only twice each month, which will enable us to put the subscription price at only fifty cents a year until the financial depression is over. At this low price many will take the *Gospel Light* who



cannot take the larger and more expensive papers. We are in no sense casting any reflection upon the larger and well established papers, and are in no way endeavoring to take or fill their place, but rather supplement them in reaching parts of the "Harvest Field" where they cannot and do not reach now. Those papers are doing untold good, and our prayer is that the brethren will continue to read and support them. We do not come with envy in our hearts toward any paper, but desire that all of them, which are loyal to the Word of the Lord may prosper and do much to advance primitive Christianity.

I have been selected as office editor of the **Gospel Light**. And I realize that there are other brethren in the state who are much better qualified than I am to fill the place, but it is necessary that the editor live where the paper is published, and I suppose that is why that responsibility has fallen upon me.

The policy of the **Gospel Light** will be to hold up to the world the Gospel of Christ in its purity and simplicity, and to encourage the brethren into greater fields of usefulness. We do not intend to fill its columns with long articles, speculating on unlearned and non-essential questions, but with Bible truths that pertain to our eternal welfare.

We shall strive to be loyal to God's Word, and to steer as free as possible from external hobbies and digressions.

We believe that we have a corps of contributors or associate editors who are competent, faithful, and have the love for the truth in their hearts, and we shall feel free to call upon them for counsel when needed.

We want the preachers of Arkansas and elsewhere to write for the paper whether their names are listed as regular contributors or not. We especially ask all preachers and elders of congregations to report your meetings and congregational development, and secure subscribers for the **Gospel Light** wherever you go. This will be worth a great deal in getting the paper before the people, and will cause others to become interested in this great work.

We realize our imperfections, but with the help of God and the brethren we believe that we can make the paper a success. Brethren, pray for us, that we may be able to discern between right and wrong; between truth and error.

The readers of the *Gospel Light* were impressed immediately with the quality of the new paper. Many were especially concerned as to what its editorial policy would



be. Brother Copeland wrote the following editorial in the January 15, 1931, issue on the subject of "Loyalty."

### LOYALTY

Many brethren are wondering whether or not the **Gospel Light** will be "loyal." In the issue of January the first, Brother W. F. Lemmons says: "It is impossible to operate a publication of this character and always keep it one hundred percent sound." I am sure Brother Lemmons is correct in that statement, but it is our desire and aim to keep the **Gospel Light** as sound and as loyal to Christ, as it is possible for us to do.

In the issue of December the fifteenth, Brother T. W. Croom has this to say: "There is one thing I am glad to see in the first issue. 'It is an expressed determination to steer clear of hobbies.' I fear, however, that there might be such a thing as making a hobby out of this very thing." I certainly appreciate that statement from Brother Croom.

Some brethren cry "hobbies" and a good part of their time they are riding hobbies. Some are ready to cry "digression" and often digress themselves. Some lay stress on being "loyal" while they are far from being loyal.

With the people there are many standards of loyalty. Some mistake zeal for loyalty, but one can be as zealous in errors as they can in the truth. (Romans 10:1-3). Some brethren seem to think if they condemn instrumental music in the worship and church societies they are loyal. Others think they must oppose literature and classes in order to be loyal while some have other standards of loyalty.

Webster defines the word loyal thus: Faithful, as to the lawful government or to be a friend; true.

From this we see if we are loyal to Christ we will not only oppose innovation and things unauthorized by Christ, but we must be faithful to Him and His government.

I am fully convinced that instrumental music in the worship is not scriptural. Yet one might condemn the instrument in the church and be far from being loyal. We must learn to sing, and to sing with the spirit and the understanding in order to be loyal. Some brethren will condemn the instrument in the strongest terms but will not pay a dollar to have the church trained to sing. They are as far from loyal as those who use the instrument.

I have never tried to justify missionary societies. I am sure that the Church of Christ is all the missionary society that we need.

Paul said the Church is the pillar and the ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15) and again: "Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages world without end." (Ephesians 3:21).

Since the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth, and since we should give God the glory through the Church then it seems to me, for man to devise a society to do that work, is to assume to improve upon the Lord's plan which is impossible for him to do. Yet one might condemn missionary societies, and not be loyal, as loyalty means faithfulness, no one can be loyal without spending some of his time and means for the cause of Christ.

I feel sure in saying there is no scripture to condemn the use of uninspired literature to assist us in the study of the Bible. Literature embraces everything that is written.

If we find a word in the Bible that we do not know its meaning we turn to a dictionary to find it. A dictionary is literature. If we want to know the history of a country that we read about in the Bible, we pick up a history. That is literature.

Many object to the use of literature in the Bible study that never put forth much effort to learn the Bible or to teach it to others.

Brethren, let's strive to be more consistent and more loyal.

The best way to get rid of the instrument in the church is to sing it out. That is to prepare ourselves and our children for the song service so that we won't need the instrument.

Let's do missionary work through the church until the missionary societies will not be necessary.

When we all become loyal to the extent that we discharge our duty in worshiping God, and in advancing His cause, just as members of the one body, and giving God the glory in the church of Christ Jesus, innovations and man-made plans will fade away with those who really love and serve the Lord.

This philosophy was restated by Brother Alexander in the April 15, 1932, issue. He explained that it is the policy of the *Gospel Light* not to print articles which promote "hobbies."

From the beginning the *Gospel Light* was an effective and successful publication. The hard work and sound management capability of Brother Alexander, with the wisdom he and Brother Copeland used in selecting articles for the paper, assured its success. They had, from the beginning, contributors who were able men with experience in teaching and preaching the gospel.

Brother Copeland wrote articles for the *Gospel Light* from time to time, in addition to helping as editor. Many of his articles were in response to requests for information on specific topics. He also answered readers' questions on the interpretation of particular scriptures.

### *One Hundredth Anniversary of the Church at Delight*

The September 15, 1932, issue of the *Gospel Light* contained an article which began: "The Delight congregation of the Church of Christ, which was organized in 1833, is making plans for its 100th anniversary." This announced, almost a year in advance, an event which was significant to the whole community. Brother Copeland was in charge of the meeting, but several other preachers took part in it. Many visitors from communities throughout southwest Arkansas attended the meeting.

The church at Delight was formally organized under the leadership of Elijah Kelley by the passing of the following resolution dated the first Sunday in April, 1833:

"Wolf Creek, Pike County, Arkansas. First Lord's Day in April, 1833. We believe that the Old and New Testaments is the only rule of faith and practice and for the government of the Church of Christ."

Seventy-five names are recorded in the church book as "charter members." Clovis Copeland, nephew of

J. A. Copeland, wrote an article which was published in the *Arkansas Gazette* on April 3, 1938, which presents some of the details of the history of this early church. Some believe this church to be the oldest congregation of the New Testament church in Arkansas. His article was based upon information found in old church records which were at that time in the hands of the daughter of Elijah Kelley, Mrs. Johnston Lamb.

At Brother Copeland's request, there was a change in the editorial duties in March, 1934. Circumstances indicated that such was the wise course of action. Brother Copeland's work load had increased, and he was not getting any younger. The following appeared on the editorial page of the March 1, 1934, issue:

#### A CHANGE IN THE EDITORIAL STAFF

By J. A. Copeland

Up to the last two issues of the *Gospel Light*, I was recognized as Editor of that paper, and Brother Grady Alexander was Publisher. If you will look at the heading now you will see that it says, Grady Alexander, Office Editor and Publisher, and J. A. Copeland, Associate Editor and Field Representative. This change was made by my request.

Brother Alexander is sole owner of the paper. But before we started it he asked me to act as Editor of the paper, and this I consented to do. At that time I had been preaching about twenty-five years and had met more of the brethren, and visited many more congregations than Brother Alexander had. But he had been in the newspaper business a number of years, besides he owned a splendid printing plant with which he prints the *Gospel Light*. I have had so much to do during this time I have had very little time to spend in the office, but when any matter came for publication that was questionable Brother Alexander would call me in and we would go over the copy together and decide whether it should be printed or not. We have never had the least disagreement, and we are not expecting any. Brother Alexander is the logical editor of the paper, and I believe in giving "honor to whom honor is due."

Beside this, I live a mile from the office and my mail comes out to my home, and quite a bit of my time I am away from home; so if mail for the *Gospel Light* comes to me sometimes it is several days before it gets to the office. Please send all subscriptions, all articles, etc., for publication and all correspondence for the paper directly to "THE GOSPEL LIGHT," Delight, Arkansas. You will get better and quicker service by so doing.

I have not severed my connection with the paper, but hope to be able to do more for it in the future than I have ever done in the past.

I here ask everyone who is interested in the progress of the *Gospel Light* to try to get more subscribers, and work up a greater interest for the paper among the brethren. I know money is scarce, but I can't think of anything that you can get for fifty cents that will be worth more to you than the *Gospel Light* will.

I know the paper is too small, but the more friends of the paper do for it, the sooner we can enlarge it. The paper will be four years old December the first. Let's roll up the subscription list so that we will be able to enlarge it by that time.

The *Gospel Light* became a weekly publication in January, 1937. Until that time it had been published twice each month. Brother Copeland had an article on the front page of the January 7, 1937, issue appealing to the readers to support the paper and to try to get others to subscribe to it. In the article he mentioned that he had "been taking the *Firm Foundation* continuously for about thirty years," that it was money well spent, and that he was just as anxious to get it as ever.

In December, 1938, a special edition of the *Gospel Light* was published. The purpose was evangelistic—to teach the plan of salvation through the pages of the paper. In addition to the regular subscriptions sent, almost 63,000 copies of the special edition were mailed to every rural route box-holder in the state of Arkansas.

Another purpose of this special effort was to familiarize more people with the *Gospel Light* and to encourage more people to become interested in its work.

The next major change in the *Gospel Light* came when Brother Alexander died in March, 1939. Naturally, there was concern as to whether publication of the paper could be continued. To answer that question, Brother Copeland wrote the following, which was published in the March 16, 1939, issue of the *Gospel Light*, after Brother Alexander passed away.

“BROTHER GRADY ALEXANDER HAS LEFT US”

By J. A. Copeland

It is with sad hearts that we send out this issue of the *Gospel Light*. Last Friday night Brother Alexander quit the walks of men, and left with us the duties and responsibilities of publishing the *Gospel Light*.

In due time much will be said by myself and others about this good man, but for the present we turn our attention to the work of this paper which was so dear to him. When we began the publication of the *Gospel Light* more than eight years ago, many brethren thought it would be run a year or two at a sacrifice of the publisher, and then be discontinued. But by the great zeal, sacrifice, and good management of Brother Alexander, and by the help of the brethren and our Heavenly Father, the paper has lived and gained in favor with the brotherhood and we trust with God.

As the news of Brother Alexander's death was sent out over telephone and radio, the question was in the minds of many, will the *Gospel Light* be discontinued? Let me answer, No, No.

He leaves behind two sons who are bright young men, with more than ordinary ability and a devoted wife who determine to carry out the program of the paper just as he planned.

A few months after he began the paper, Brother Alexander had a bad spell of sickness. He called me to his bedside and told me if he should fail to get well, he wanted the paper to go on. He said he had enough paper bought to print it for several months.

Flanoy Alexander, the older son, will be publisher and business manager. He is a young man, being 25 years of age, and is a boy of rare ability. He is familiar with the plans his father made for the growth of the *Gospel Light* and is going to carry them out, if it is the Lord's will.



Yes, the paper will be enlarged in a few weeks just as Brother Alexander had planned. Now, brethren, did you love Brother Alexander? If so, push the work of the **Gospel Light**. His greatest ambition was to see it grow, and accomplish good. Do you love the Lord? Tell the world about Him through this paper. Get subscribers, get renewals, report your work, write short and pointed articles for the paper, prepare your manuscripts well. Someone may say, I am afraid to work for the paper, it may fail. No, it will not fail. With such men as James L. Neal, E. M. Borden, E. R. Harper, Roy Lanier, George B. Curtis, D. H. Perkins, J. T. Gabbert, V. E. Howard, C. L. Embrey, R. L. Colley, besides a host of others; and especially a number of young preachers who are interested in the **Gospel Light**, standing by it, and all this coupled with Flanoy and Burnham Alexander's business ability, and the splendid machinery and equipment with which to work, no, the **Gospel Light** cannot fail. Brethren, don't disappoint us, but begin to work for the paper now.

Beginning with the April 6, 1939, issue, the *Gospel Light* was an eight-page paper. The page size was reduced to nine inches by twelve inches. This change had been planned by Brother Alexander before he died.

The following article, written by Brother Copeland in the April 6, 1939, issue, describes the relationship which had existed between Brother Alexander and Brother Copeland.

#### MY FELLOW WORKER

(By J. A. Copeland)

Grady Alexander was born January 11, 1891, and died March 10, 1939. He was married to Mary Burnham, May 9, 1912. To this union were born two sons, Flanoy and Burnham, besides three babies who died in infancy.

He was baptized by C. W. Stevenson at the age of fifteen, and grew more devoted to the Lord as the years passed by.

His father and mother died when he was but a boy, and he had the battles of life to fight alone. Brother Alexander worked on the farm for a while and when comparatively a young man he began to publish a county newspaper. He continued to work

on the farm occasionally as long as he lived. He also became a good business man, and became successful in the newspaper business. He also became active in county and state affairs, and served his county in the State Legislature. In all of these things he was conscientious, and always wanted to do the right thing, whether it was popular or not. After he and I became associated together in the **Gospel Light**, he had strong solicitations from a number of influential people in his district, to run for State Senator. He asked me for advice with reference to the matter. I told him that I would not advise him, but I was afraid it might injure the influence of the **Gospel Light**.

He didn't think so, so I told him to not let my judgment hinder him in what he thought was best. He announced in the papers, but soon learned that the most influential men working for him expected him to try to pass certain measures that he believed to be wrong. He at once drew out of the race, because his conscience would not let him work for measures that he believed to be wrong.

Some ten years ago Brother Alexander came to me and wanted me to assist him in establishing and running a gospel paper. I did not encourage the matter, for I realized I was not an editor and I had known several papers to fail for the lack of finances and proper management.

About a year later he came to me again, with the same plea, and convinced me that he could finance it. This time I agreed to do what I could to assist him. More than eight years have rolled around and that through one of the worst depressions that our country has seen, and the **Gospel Light** still lives and grows and has a greater influence as the years go by.

In these eight years of our work together there has not been the least bit of variance between us. When he would receive an article for publication in which he had doubts, he would either call me over the telephone, or wait until I came to the office, and our judgment was so near the same that it did not take much discussion for us to decide whether to print the article or not.

Brother Alexander was a good writer, but he seldom wrote for the paper. When I would ask him why he did not write more, he would say there is plenty of good material in the office from other brethren, and he had no desire to make himself conspicuous.

He was a splendid Bible teacher. He had been teacher of the adult young people's class, both Sunday morning, and at night, for several years. It will be hard to fill his place in that work.



He was a successful newspaper man. He started out without money, and with but little experience. He has published a county newspaper for a number of years, and has done his work well.

Grady Alexander was human, and had faults, but he could freely confess them. And I read in God's Holy Book, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jno. 1:9).

I knew him when he was a small child. I knew him after his father died when he and his mother were struggling with three smaller children, to drive the wolf from the door. I knew him after his mother died, as an orphan boy, fighting the battles of life alone. I knew him when that pure neighbor girl, Mary Burnham, became his partner in life, to share his joys and sorrows. I have known him through the years as he developed into maturity and usefulness. But at last I must say, Farewell, Fellow Worker, until we meet on the other shore.

At the time of Brother Alexander's death, Brother Copeland was living at Hope, Arkansas, working with the Fifth and Grady Streets congregation. Brother Alexander's sons, Flanoy and Burnham, took over the job of publishing the *Gospel Light*. They had worked with their father in the printing plant since they were boys and were, therefore, thoroughly familiar with the business. Flanoy was 25 and Burnham was 20 years old at that time.

Because of their age and the responsibility of the job, they asked Brother Copeland to be the editor of the paper again. He agreed to accept, and until August, 1944, his name was listed as editor. In actual practice, however, he did very little of the work as editor, but rather served as advisor occasionally.

The following statement written by Brother Copeland was published in the *Gospel Light* on August 3, 1944:

## "A MINOR CHANGE IN THE GOSPEL LIGHT"

J. A. Copeland

By my request brother Alexander has agreed to drop my name as editor of the *Gospel Light*. This is not because there has been any ill feelings between us, for there has never been anything but perfect cooperation with us. Neither does it mean that I will do less for the *Gospel Light* than I have done in the past. I hope to do more for the paper next year than I have ever done. I think it will not be out of order to tell the readers why I have been connected with the paper, and why my name should now be dropped as editor.

When brother Grady Alexander started the *Gospel Light*, he had not been preaching long, and was not acquainted with the brethren in a general way as well as I. He was already at that time a successful newspaper man, and had a splendid outfit with which to print a gospel paper. He asked me if I would be editor, until he became better known among the brethren, and assist in making decisions on any matter that might be questionable. In two or three years I asked him to drop my name as editor and place his there, as he really was the editor, and I was only in name. After some persuasion on my part, he did so and I was placed as an Associate Editor, and we worked in perfect harmony until the day of his death.

When brother Alexander died his son, Flanoy, who has run the paper since that time, was rather young for such a responsible place. He insisted that my name be placed as editor again, and help in any way I could, except working in the office, as I was not needed there. In a short time we could see that he could do the work and do it well.

I have never owned the paper, nor any of the office equipment, but have done what little I have done, hoping that much good would be done through the paper. They have not let me sacrifice anything in a financial way, but have always given me commissions on subscriptions taken, and on books I have sold.

So by my request we are dropping my name as editor again. In the first place I am not editor, and if there be any honor in it I believe in giving "honor to whom honor is due." If it takes sacrifices to run a paper (and it does), then I fear I have not done enough.

Another reason I have made this request. I am away from home a good part of the time, and may move away soon. I now live a mile from the office. It is sometimes several days before I return home to give correspondence attention, while the party writing may be awaiting an answer. Brethren, please send anything intended for the paper to The Gospel Light, Delight, Arkansas, if you want it to receive prompt attention.

I want to express my appreciation for what so many good brothers and sisters have done for the paper. May God bless all of you, and let us try to make the paper better each year.

Brother James L. Neal has been a very faithful worker for the paper, almost from the beginning. He has done much to enlarge its circulation, and has also furnished much valuable and scriptural material for its pages. God bless such workers.

Another faithful worker for the **Gospel Light** is brother George B. Curtis. I want him to know while I live, and while he lives, that we believe the paper has been made better by his many timely and scriptural articles. We are not able to reward such men for their labors here, but God is able to reward them in the hereafter. To the many others who have been so faithful, we are also grateful.

Let us strive to make the **Gospel Light** better as the years go by.—J. A. Copeland.

Flanoy Alexander had the following comments following the article given above:

I am sure the above statement and explanation by brother Copeland needs no comment from me. However, I believe it is in order that I make a short statement relative to both the past and the future work of the **Gospel Light**.

As stated by brother Copeland, the idea of publishing a Gospel paper called "The Gospel Light," was conceived in the mind of my father, Grady Alexander, many months before the appearance of the first issue in December, 1930. I know the motive that prompted its inception. I know his intention was to give the common people a religious journal that is truly 'Christian.' A journal that will teach people how to become Christians and inspire them to continue to live the Christian life.

Knowing the life of, and being associated with brother Copeland as he was, I think it only natural that he should want him to be associated with the paper in its beginning. The

friendship that existed between brother Copeland and my father was indeed close. This association and true friendship continued until the death of my father.

Since my father passed away brother Copeland has been to me both a father and a brother. I love and admire him for what he is and for his work's sake. He has counseled with, and advised me many times. This is indeed appreciated and I thank him for it.

Aside from the fact that he is a great and Godly man, brother Copeland and his wife have reared a large family, with every one of their twelve children devoted to their parents and to God. Three boys are ministers of the Gospel. One of his daughters, I think, is a choice creation of God. She has been an inspiration to me in many ways, and I thank God for women of her kind—she's my wife.

Several times brother Copeland has suggested to me that my name be placed as editor of the *Gospel Light*. While I by no means feel equal to the task, I realize the responsibilities connected with the editing of a religious journal. I do know, by reason of my being editor of a secular newspaper for several years, that it is impossible to please all the people all the time.

I have always been guided by the thing that I believe to be right, which many times has proven to be a financial disadvantage. Knowing these things, I fully realize the responsibility that has been thrown on the shoulders of brother Copeland as editor of the *Gospel Light*, and that without financial remuneration, except for what small commissions we have been able to extend on subscriptions he has taken and books and other items he has sold for the office. Brother Copeland is, and has been spending all his time in the ministry of the Gospel by word of mouth. It is my intention to relieve him of any burden that I possibly can.

So, at his request his name has been placed with our associate editors. We will continue to counsel with him and seek his opinion in many things. However, all criticisms, complaints, etc. that you have to offer regarding what is, or what is not published in the *Gospel Light* will please be directed to the *Gospel Light* office and I will be personally responsible. Of course, any word of commendation which you would like to offer to any of our associate editors, or other writers, may be directed to them at their home address.

So, as brother Copeland suggests, let us press on to make the *Gospel Light* a medium through which much good is done.

Flanoy Alexander.

Another change was made in April, 1939. Since the establishment of the *Gospel Light*, Brother Copeland had written answers to most of the questions which were sent to the paper. That took time, and Brother Copeland found that after Brother Grady Alexander was no longer there to help with the questions, that it was more than he could do.

The action taken by Brother Copeland illustrates the careful good judgment he used in making decisions. Not only did he talk with Flanoy Alexander but he also talked with other brethren to get their thoughts. He then wrote to George B. Curtis of Morrilton and asked him if he would be willing to take charge of the Questions and Answers Department, and he agreed to do so.

Through the years, a number of very capable contributors wrote for the *Gospel Light*. In the first issue of December 1, 1930, the following were listed as associate editors: Glenn E. Green, Little Rock; J. C. Dawson, Conway; L. C. Sears, Morrilton; J. W. Brents, Muskogee, Oklahoma; R. H. Johnson, Morrilton; Brooks Stell, Delight; James E. Laird, Ft. Smith; and J. N. Armstrong, Morrilton.

Many fine articles and reports have been sent by many, many preachers, elders, and members of the church. The major articles, however, have come from those designated from time to time as "associate editors" or "contributing editors." Some of the men who have served in that capacity over the years are: George B. Curtis, James L. Neal, E. R. Harper, Gilbert Copeland, Ted W. McElroy, John W. Wilson, F. A. Hartsell, Vaughn D. Shofner, and Gussie Lambert.

Brother Copeland wrote many articles for the *Gospel Light* during the twenty-five years from its establishment until his death. Many of his articles were written upon request, and covered a wide range of topics. Many came to him, also, for personal advice and counseling. He had an unusual sense of awareness of others' feelings and



needs. Sensitive and perceptive, he demonstrated empathic understanding of other people's problems. He really listened to others and was able to communicate with them. He was relaxed in his relations with others, having no need for impressing them with his own virtues. He was, therefore, able to communicate a feeling of true tolerance, compassion, and understanding. These qualities were combined with unusually sound judgment. People turned to him quite naturally when they needed help of any kind because they trusted him; they knew he would be concerned and knew he would be able to help them.

Often Brother Copeland's articles in the *Gospel Light* were presented in a series of articles, when the subject could not be covered adequately in one article. He was an excellent writer, considering the limited formal education he had. His style was unpretentious, straight-forward, and contained a kind of logic which was most convincing. He stressed his points by quoting scriptures which were directly applicable to the thought presented. Never wasting words, he wrote what he meant in a simple and forceful manner.

He, and the *Gospel Light*, remained faithful to the original policy of not presenting materials to promote any "hobbies" or special interests. The only criterion was and remains, "What does the Bible teach?"

## CHAPTER X

# The Ministry Changes

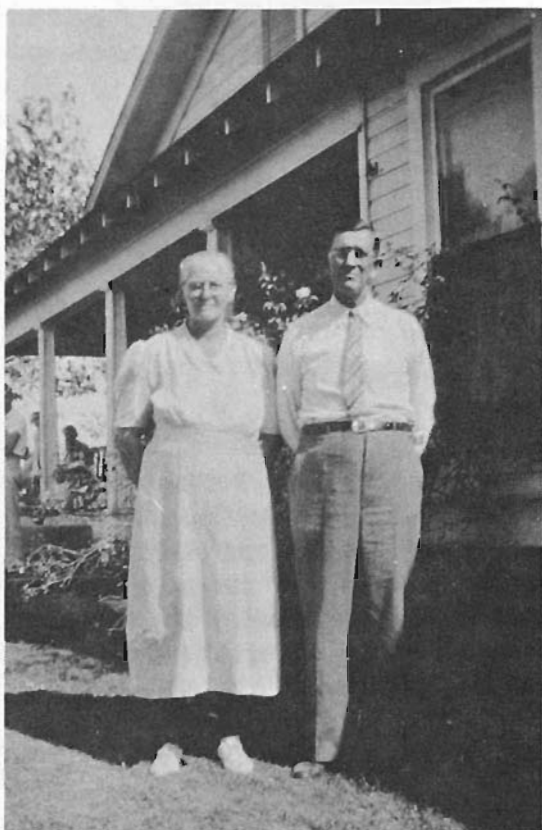
After more than thirty years of preaching the gospel in the manner described in his essay, "The Country Preacher," (page 73), Brother Copeland accepted a call to work with the church at Hope, Arkansas. For the first time, he agreed to work with one congregation, full-time, except for his meetings during the summer and fall months. The move was reported in the September 15, 1938, issue of the *Gospel Light* as follows:

### Brother Copeland Moved

Brother J. A. Copeland who has been working at the Delight church for the past 11 years, moved with his family to Hope this week. Brother Copeland will have charge of the work at Hope after about another month when his summer's meetings have closed.

Brother Copeland came to Delight 11 years ago, when the church of Christ here consisted of a mere handful of elderly people, and scarcely any young people in the congregation. We have witnessed a steady increase in both membership and attendance during this time, and the church feels grateful for his labors, and regrets very much to lose him from our midst.

Brother Copeland will continue to have the same connection with the *Gospel Light* in the future as in the past. Those desiring to have him answer questions through the *Gospel Light* will please send their questions direct to him at Hope.



J. A. and Georgia Copeland  
At Delight, about 1938

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Although the Copeland family had moved several times in the past, the move to Hope brought about greater changes than previous moves. They had never lived in town before; farm life had been the only way of life they had known. Brother Copeland had never done "local" work before, working with and preaching for one congregation. It was to be quite different from the work he had done before.

Accepting change is hard for most people; it is more difficult for some than for others. Brother Copeland was



able to accept change more easily than most people, for a very simple reason. In this case, as always, he viewed the change not in terms of personal gain, but with a strong conviction that it was in harmony with the Lord's will for him. However, he was concerned that his brethren understand his decision to change his field of service. That concern was expressed in the following article which he wrote for the September 29, 1938, issue of the *Gospel Light*:

**"Should A Preacher Choose His Work?"**

By J. A. Copeland

Many of the brethren have learned by this time that I have moved to Hope, Arkansas, to work with the church here. Does a preacher have a right to choose his field of labor, if he will keep in his heart a desire to do all the good he can? Other classes in the church feel free to choose where they shall live and what they shall do, but many of them don't seem to think that a preacher should have that liberty.

Of course a preacher should not be prompted by a selfish motive in making his decisions, but if his desire is to do good, and to advance the kingdom of Christ, does he have a right to consult his judgment as to where and how he works.

Many times brethren will censure a preacher when he changes his plan of work. That is, if he has been doing evangelistic work and decides to do local work for a while; or if he had been preaching for 4 or 5 congregations, and decided to locate with, and preach for one congregation. Who has the right to decide these things if the preacher does not?

I have been at Delight 11 years. I have preached for the church there monthly and twice a month all this time, except through the summer and fall when I was away in meetings. During this time I have assisted them in five or six protracted meetings. While I have nothing personally against the church at Delight, I love the place, I love the membership; and so far as I know they have nothing personally against my family nor me, and they have not asked me to give up the work there. But, I think the change does good sometimes, and I hope it will do good there. The church there has been very good to us for

which we are truly thankful, and if we live and it is the Lord's will, we expect to live at Delight again. May the Lord abundantly bless the church there is our prayer.

I am at this writing in a meeting near McAlester, Oklahoma. If it is the Lord's will, I shall begin full time work with the church at Hope the first Lord's day in October. As to how much good I can accomplish there, I do not know. I shall strive to do what I can. If you pass our way, stop and worship with us. In writing, please address me 615 West Fifth Street, Hope, Arkansas.

Brother Copeland was 57 years old when they moved to Hope. By this time the many years of hard work on the farm and the burden of responsibilities had begun to show in his physical stature. As a young man he stood tall and strong; in later years his shoulders seemed slightly stooped with the weight of cares and responsibilities. He inherited, also, a condition which is sometimes called "shaking palsy." It appears most often between the ages of fifty and seventy, and more men than women have it. In Brother Copeland's case, it began when he was in his forty's and became worse as he grew older. It was marked by a tremor of the hands, particularly, making writing most difficult for him. In later years he used a typewriter for all his correspondence.

Only three of the children were still at home when they moved to Hope. Ordis and Oleva had finished high school at Delight in May, 1937. Jady Wilson entered the eleventh grade in high school at Hope in the fall of 1938. He finished high school at Hope in the spring of 1940.

After his summer meetings were finished, Brother Copeland began his work with the church at Hope on the first Sunday in October, 1938. The family had moved about two weeks earlier. They lived in a house which was next door to the church building, on Fifth Street. The preacher's residence had been left to the church by a Sister Atkins, who had been very liberal in her support of the church and its work.

The church at Hope was fairly strong at that time. Gilbert Copeland had been working with the church there for four years. At the time Brother Copeland was there, the congregation had approximately 100 to 125 members. They were liberal in their support of the preacher, for those days. The church provided the preacher a house, rent-free, and paid Brother Copeland \$25.00 each week.

Although Brother Copeland had been preaching many years and had spent countless hours studying, he still studied diligently in preparation for each sermon or class he taught. Each week he planned and studied lessons for an adult Bible class Sunday morning, two sermons for each Sunday, and the Bible class for Wednesday night.

Nine years had passed since the burning of the house, which destroyed all of his notes and sermon outlines. During those years he had studied hard and had built up his library of reference books and his collection of notes and sermon outlines. His many years of regular study of the Bible made it easier for him to prepare lessons and sermons than it had been in his early years.

During his first year at Hope, Brother Copeland used his talent for carpentry to build new classrooms adjoining the church building. He did, of course, have some help, but he did most of the work himself.

Each summer, as usual, he held evangelistic meetings for churches throughout south Arkansas, in Oklahoma, and in Mississippi. The church at Hope had agreed to allow him time for meetings, many of which had been scheduled some years ahead.

Much of Brother Copeland's time was spent in visiting among the members of the church, especially when anyone was sick or bereaved. He seemed to have a special talent for comforting and working with those who were sick. His sensitive nature and true concern for the welfare of others helped to comfort and encourage hundreds of people throughout the years of his ministry.

While at Hope, he performed numerous marriage ceremonies, in part because the Court House was only a few blocks from where he lived. He received calls from far and wide to conduct funerals. Because of his work, he was known by members of the church in many congregations.



Standing, left to right: Addie Lee (Watkins) Watson, John Delaney, Clara (Watkins) Delaney, Georgia (Watkins) Copeland, ~~J.A.~~ Copeland; Seated: S. W. Watson, Emma (Hardie) Watkins, ~~J.A.~~ Copeland.

## CHAPTER XI

# At Home But Not Idle

After almost four years at Hope, Brother and Sister Copeland moved back to Delight. His stay at Hope, from the fall of 1938 to June, 1942, was the longest period in his ministry when Brother Copeland worked with one congregation full-time. His background, his interests, and his style of preaching were best suited for evangelistic meetings and working with country churches. After they had moved back to Delight, he wrote the following report which was published in the *Gospel Light* in November, 1942.

### AT HOME AGAIN BUT NOT IDLE

J. A. Copeland

After being away from my home at Delight a majority of the time for four years, I am at home again. I spent a little more than three and a half years at Hope, Arkansas, working with the church there full time, except through the summers when I was engaged in meetings. I enjoyed the work with the church at Hope, and I trust some good was done. All things considered, I believe the church there is in a better condition than ever before. Brother Taylor Davis is with them now, and I believe he is a good man for the place. My heart's desire and prayer to God is, that the church there may grow and prosper, and I believe it will.

I moved home in June, but I have been away in meetings a good part of the time, so I have not been at home a great deal

yet. I expect to be at home more for a while, but I shall not be idle. For about thirty-three years, I preached for country churches, and churches in small towns through the winter and spring, and held meetings in the summer and fall. I still like that kind of work. I preach to more people that way than I do when I am preaching for one congregation.

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The Home Place at Delight

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Delight really was home for the Copelands. And they were glad to be back home. Except for two short periods of time, they were to live at Delight until Brother Copeland's death in 1955. During the summer and fall months, Brother Copeland spent a great deal of time away from home in meetings. In the later years, Sister Copeland often went with him for meetings.

Another temporary move, to Arp, Texas, was made in 1944. Arp is a small town in east Texas, about eighteen miles southeast of Tyler. Brother Ed Honeycutt, who had lived at Billstown and Delight, had moved to Arp some years earlier. Brother Copeland was invited to hold a meeting at Arp during the last week in May and the first week in June, 1944. The church there was small in numbers, but Brother Copeland saw an opportunity for doing good. He was persuaded, therefore, to



work with the Arp congregation full-time, beginning in October of that year.

In the October 26, 1944, issue of the *Gospel Light*, Brother Copeland reported:

By the time this reaches the reader, I will be located at Arp, Texas, if it is the Lord's will. I will work for the **Gospel Light** as I have in the past, and in a few weeks I think I will have time to write more for the paper than I have in the past. Please address me at Arp, Texas.

Brother Copeland and Jady Wilson, his youngest son, worked together in a meeting at Arp during June, 1945. Jady Wilson preached at the morning services, while Brother Copeland led singing. At the night services, Brother Copeland preached and Jady Wilson led singing. Twelve were baptized, three of whom were heads of families and dependable men. Others who were members of the church confessed wrongs. The meeting ended the last Sunday in June. The meeting also brought to a close the full-time work Brother Copeland did for that congregation. Jady Wilson later worked with the church in Arp.

In an article published in the *Gospel Light* July 19, 1945, Brother Copeland commended the members of the church at Arp as he announced that he was moving back home. He encouraged the readers to help the church at Arp to find a preacher. All of the members wanted him to stay, he reported, then added:

"But we have a number of children in southwest Arkansas and as we are in our sixties now, and as there is more work in the Lord's vineyard nearer our home than we can do, we decided it best for us to get back near home." At the end of his report he said, "If it is the Lord's will, we will locate at Prescott, Arkansas, in October. Until then, address me at Delight."

After his summer and fall meetings, Brother Copeland began work with the church at Prescott about the

middle of October. However, they did not move to Prescott until the first of December. In a report he wrote for the *Gospel Light* for January 10, 1946, Brother Copeland said, "This may be my home for two or three years. Address me: 502 West Elm Street, Prescott, Arkansas."

Except for the time spent in meetings, he worked full-time for the Prescott congregation until June, 1947. They moved back to the home place in February, 1947. The following report was written by Brother Copeland and published in the February 6, 1947, issue of the *Gospel Light*:

I am back at my home at Delight. We never know the future but we feel that it is possible that this will be our earthly dwelling place as long as we need a home here. My wife and I both love to be at home, and I can get plenty of work in reach of here.

I will continue my work at Prescott until June, then I will be in meetings until fall. After that I will take work with congregations in reach of Delight. I hope to be able to write more for the *Gospel Light*. I am sixty-five years of age and have good health. And whether I am permitted to stay here one year, ten years or twenty years, I hope to be mentally and physically fit to put in my time in the Lord's service.

When Brother Copeland wrote that "it is probable that this will be our earthly dwelling place as long as we need a home here," he expressed the attitude found in his oft-spoken phrase, "if it is the Lord's will." And, it was the Lord's will that Delight be his earthly home until the end.

### *50th Wedding Anniversary*

One highlight in the later years of Brother and Sister Copeland was the celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary on Christmas Day, 1948. Some of the brothers and sisters talked about planning a special day for Mama and Papa almost a year ahead of the time.





The J. A. Copeland Family — Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary, December 25, 1948. Back row, left to right: Jady Wilson, Ordis, Sweeney, Gilbert; Middle row: Vida, Oleva, Floy, Joy, Willie, Estelle; Front row: Ruth, J. A. Copeland, Georgia, Elsie.

Sweeney wrote to the others who were not present when it was first discussed. He encouraged everyone to make plans to be at the home place at Delight for Christmas Day. Since Christmas Day fell on Saturday in 1948, they decided to celebrate the event on that day instead of December 21, which was their anniversary date.

It was decided that they would buy a refrigerator for Brother and Sister Copeland. Since they needed the refrigerator, they decided to give it to them early. Brother and Sister Copeland had never owned an electric refrigerator. Several of the brothers and sisters were at Delight in the early summer, 1948, when the refrigerator was delivered. At Christmas, Brother and Sister Copeland were each to receive a new watch in addition to the other gifts each family would bring. The grandchildren contributed to the fund to buy the watches.

Plans were made to invite the Copelands' many, many friends and neighbors, and relatives to open house in the afternoon of Christmas Day. The daughters-in-law were to serve the guests. A special cake was ordered; Estelle, who lived at Malvern, assumed responsibility for bringing the cake. It was three tiers high, about twelve inches tall. Jady and Dorothy, who lived at Arp, were to bring yellow roses from Tyler, the "City of Roses."

As usual, everyone brought food for Christmas dinner. However, since it was a special occasion, two maids were employed to help prepare and serve the food. Thus the ladies were free to take part in the making of pictures which occupied much of the time immediately before dinner.

Since guests would be arriving soon after dinner, the devotional was held before they ate. After a few songs and prayer, Brother Copeland talked to the group for a few minutes. It was at this time that he made the statement: "It's not how long we live but *how* we live that matters." As Flanoy Alexander so aptly expressed it in the *Gospel Light*, "When those words were spoken,



J. A. and Georgia Copeland  
50th Wedding Anniversary, Dec. 25, 1948.

all present knew there were two hearts beating in unison, for this thought has been portrayed in the family lives of this couple for these many years.”

Friends and relatives from many places came that afternoon to pay tribute to this wonderful couple. Some of the visitors had known both Brother and Sister Copeland since childhood. Although many did not sign the guest book, names of guests from Little Rock, Prescott, Pleasant Home, Camden, Pleasant Hill, Magnolia, Antoine, Nashville, and other communities were recorded. To commemorate the anniversary, Mrs. B. H. Gleason, of Waldo, Arkansas, made a booklet of original pen-and-ink drawings with an original poem depicting the fifty years of Brother and Sister Copeland’s life together.

The event was reported in the January 20, 1949, issue of the *Gospel Light* in a full-page article with pictures. The events of the day were described, a brief history of Brother Copeland's work was given, and the names and addresses of the twelve children.

### *The Corinth Homecoming of 1950*

Another highlight of Brother Copeland's later years was the 100th anniversary of the Corinth church, which was observed Saturday and Sunday, September 30 and October 1, 1950. Sixty-nine years earlier he had been born in that community, and he had preached there off and on for about forty-five years. The occasion brought together hundreds of friends and "kinfolks" from at least a dozen states.

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The Corinth Church Building as it was in 1950.

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Several days before the main event, nearby Nashville, Arkansas, became the headquarters for many families who gathered to visit with relatives and friends. Every hotel and motel in the vicinity was filled to capacity and all the "spare beds" in many homes were taken. Early Saturday morning cars loaded with people began to arrive at Corinth. The day was given to visiting, renew-

ing of acquaintances, and the making of short talks. During the day a brief history of the Corinth church was given. Many also told of having attended the "old Nazareth University," which once stood near the site of the church building.

The most significant work of the Corinth church is the fact that its influence in the past has been either directly or indirectly responsible for the establishment and growth of so many other congregations. Someone had taken the time to list some seventy-five or eighty congregations whose leaders descended from those who were a part of the Corinth congregation.

On Sunday morning, there was more solemnity to the occasion. In addition to the fellowship with friends and loved ones of yesteryears, most of those present came to worship the Lord. The worship service began at ten o'clock with the singing of songs which had been familiar to Corinth worshippers for 100 years. The opening prayer was lead by D. S. Ligon, an aged minister of the gospel. J. A. Copeland, who acted as master of ceremonies, gave a short talk on the founding of the Corinth church and something of its early leaders. His talk was followed by a thirty-minute sermon by Vaughn Shofner of Lubbock, Texas, on "The Growth of the Kingdom." Brother Shofner was followed by Don Morris, President of Abilene Christian College, Abilene, Texas. Brother Morris told how his travels in connection with the college had brought him in contact with so many who had been influenced by "old Corinth." He stated that almost everywhere he went he found people who were descendants of Corinth people, or had known of the church there through some acquaintance. Several members of the College Board of Directors had been former Corinthians, he said, and some of the teachers in the college also traced their ancestry to Corinth.

Following the sermons the communion service was observed by several hundred people who filled the building and the large tent adjoining it.

After a lunch hour of eating and visiting with friends, the afternoon was given to talks by visitors. The talks were scheduled for five minutes each, but some contended that what they had to say could not be told in five minutes.

The 1950 homecoming at Corinth was truly a once-in-a-lifetime event!

## CHAPTER XII

# Declining Health

Brother Copeland was in fairly good health until his seventy-first year. At Christmas-time, 1951, he had a severe cold which gradually became worse, with a painful cough. On Christmas day he complained of pains in his chest. In the weeks that followed, he saw a doctor at Murfreesboro and Doctor Buchanan at Prescott. Penicillin was prescribed, among other forms of medication. As the days and weeks passed, Brother Copeland's condition improved somewhat, but he did not fully recover from the effects of the illness and the medication.

The winter months dragged on, and Brother Copeland was not able to resume his usual work schedule. He had to cancel his preaching appointments on several occasions, because he was not able to go.

Ordis lived at Coy, near England, Arkansas, at that time. He was preaching for the congregation at Coy. In March, 1952, Brother and Sister Copeland went home with Ordis and family to stay a while. While they were there, Ordis took Brother Copeland to a doctor in Little Rock. After a thorough examination, the doctor diagnosed his condition as virus pneumonia and prescribed an anti-biotic drug which was new at the time. Within a short time Brother Copeland's condition improved considerably. The lingering cough and other symptoms as-





The Copeland Brothers, May, 1955. Left to right, youngest to oldest: Alvin, Zeta, J. A., Felix, Charlie, and Harrison.

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sociated with the pneumonia cleared up almost completely. However, Brother Copeland continued to mention pains in his chest.

After about six weeks with Ordis and his family at Coy, Brother and Sister Copeland decided to spend some time with Gilbert and his family at Wichita Falls, Texas. Gilbert was preaching for the Floral Heights congregation in Wichita Falls at that time. That decision was influenced greatly by Jady's brother, Felix, who lived near Little Rock. He believed, and convinced Jady, that the dry climate at Wichita Falls would be good for his health. In April of that year, Brother Copeland celebrated his seventy-first birthday at Gilbert's house.

They had been there only a short time when Brother Copeland had a light heart attack. The doctor agreed to allow him to stay at Gilbert's house instead of going to the hospital.

During his stay there, while recuperating, Oleva, who lived at Cleburne, Texas, at that time, went to spend some time with the Copelands at Wichita Falls. She remembers having some serious talks with her father during those days. They talked about life, and death, and the importance of living in harmony with God's laws in order to be ready for the inevitable time.

Brother Copeland's condition was gradually improving after the heart attack, when Gilbert left for a meeting in Springfield, Missouri. The meeting had been scheduled for some time, and was to begin on May 9, 1952. After he left, and Oleva went back home, both Brother and Sister Copeland became homesick for their home in Arkansas. They had been away from home most of the time for about two months. It was springtime; they wanted to be home. It was time to plant the garden and many other things needed their attention.

Finally, Otsy called Joy and told her how homesick Brother and Sister Copeland were. They decided to take them home. It was agreed that Otsy and Milton would take Brother and Sister Copeland as far as Durant, Oklahoma, and Joy and Flanoy would meet them there to take them on to Delight. This plan was carried out, in early May, 1952. Brother Copeland was still not well.

They were happy to be home, but were disappointed that Brother Copeland's condition did not improve very much. It had been a long winter of sickness for him, and he was unable to regain his strength. His physical condition by this time was causing discouragement and depression. He began to be truly concerned about his inability to recover his strength as he had after previous illnesses.

During the second week-end in May, Sweeney and some of the sisters were at Delight. They talked about Brother Copeland's condition and what should be done. They decided that he should enter the hospital at Prescott, under Doctor Hesterly's care. Doctor Hesterly,

who was already his doctor, agreed to admit Brother Copeland to the hospital for tests and observation. He entered the hospital on Thursday, May 15, still complaining with chest pains. At that time it was thought that the pains were the result of his long siege of the virus pneumonia and his heart attack. His concern for his condition increased. At times he could not relax and could not sleep. He suffered from the pains in the chest to the extent that it was hard for him to breathe. At times he experienced sensations of smothering; he could not get enough air into his lungs. The doctor examined him carefully several times and told members of the family that the smothering spells were due to his nerves, that there were no physical causes for such difficulty in breathing. He emphasized, however, that the results were the same; the suffering was real and the difficulty in breathing just as painful as it would be if caused by physical conditions.

After a week in the hospital Brother Copeland was not any better. One night he suffered a smothering spell so severe that he feared that he would not live until morning. He asked the nurse to call Sister Copeland who was at Vida's house there in Prescott.

Although he had gained very little, after about two weeks the decision was made to take him home. Since his recovery was being hindered by his nerves, the family decided that he would be better off at home. He needed rest and quiet. At home they were able to provide the quiet atmosphere which was not possible at the hospital. Friends and relatives were informed that visits would be kept to a minimum. For some time only a few people were allowed to visit and talk with Brother Copeland, and their visits were of short duration.

Gradually his condition became better. He regained some strength, but was never as strong as before the pneumonia began about Christmas-time of 1951. He was sick almost continuously for about six months. Brother

Copeland was never again in good health after the siege described here. He was not able to preach during the summer of 1952; all of his scheduled meetings were cancelled. Later, however, he did resume his week-end preaching appointments, and held a few meetings.

Sometime during the following summer, in 1953, Brother Copeland suffered what the doctor called a "light stroke." Although an unusual experience, it caused him very little physical pain and lasted a very short time. He had been in the garden with Sister Copeland as she gathered some vegetables. After they were back in the house, he passed out—was completely unconscious for a few minutes. When he revived, he had amnesia for almost thirty minutes and could not remember anything. He could not even recall any of the children's names.

Sister Copeland was upset and immediately called Joy. She and Otsy, who was at Joy's while Gilbert was in a meeting, came as quickly as possible. Flanoy came a few minutes later. The doctor was called as soon as it happened, but by the time he got there, Brother Copeland was feeling well and had regained his memory.



## CHAPTER XIII

# The Billstown Reunion: Honor to Whom Honor

On August 22, 1954, people from far and near gathered at Billstown, near Delight, Arkansas, to honor and pay tribute to J. A. Copeland. He had begun his efforts to preach the gospel at that place fifty years earlier, in the fall of 1904. Plans and preparation had begun several months before. A number of people helped with the planning. As far as anyone is able to recall now, the idea originated with Carl Mick, a young man who was preaching for the Delight and Antoine congregations at that time. Carl wrote: “. . . it was one of the few suggestions I ever made that was immediately accepted as the obvious thing to do.”

Brother Copeland preached at the morning worship service. His topic was “Christ in the Home.” He explained that some years ago Brother W. T. Champion had suggested that he write a tract on the subject of rearing children in a Christian home. Brother Copeland published a series of articles on the subject in the *Gospel Light*. And he had preached on the subject in many congregations.

Those present who had not heard Brother Copeland preach for several years enjoyed hearing the sound of his voice once again, and appreciated the earnestness with which he presented the sermon. However, the changes in Brother Copeland and his preaching, compared to years past, were forced upon their attention. The tremor in his hands was more noticeable, and at one point he mentioned that his eyesight was no longer what it once was. His memory was not as good as it was in earlier years—several times during his sermon he had difficulty recalling the location of certain scriptures. And he read many passages instead of quoting them from memory as he did in the past. At times, he hesitated, mentally struggling to call to mind a particular word.

Everybody had brought food; at noon they had an old-fashioned “dinner-on-the-ground.” Many more people arrived for lunch, and many others after lunch, to hear the speakers and singing which made up the afternoon program. Carl Mick acted as Master of Ceremonies. In his introductory remarks he explained that the purpose of the reunion was to honor Brother Copeland in memory of his fifty years of service as a minister of the gospel. He suggested that it was indeed appropriate to honor Brother Copeland for two things in particular: his works and his life. In speaking of his life, Brother Mick said,

“Brother Copeland has practiced among us the things he has taught us from God’s word.”

He then referred to the qualifications of bishops stated in 1 Timothy, chapter three. In teaching on the qualifications of elders, he said he “always brings in Brother Copeland as an example of one who is blameless—one whose reputation is blameless.” Also, he said that wherever you go everyone speaks well of Brother Copeland. He has a “good report,” not only among the members of the church, but also “of them which are without.” (1 Timothy 3:7).

“ . . . though they may not agree with the truth he preaches, yet they highly respect and honor him for his life,” Brother Mick said.

Before introducing the first speaker, Brother Mick mentioned two other characteristics for which he praised Brother Copeland: his interest in and encouragement of young preachers, and that he had remained “young in spirit.”

Brother Jeff Reese was introduced as the first speaker. He began by saying that he had known Brother Copeland about fifty-five years and had been a fellow-preacher for forty-seven of Brother Copeland’s fifty years.

“There’s not a better man on the earth, to my knowing, or a better gospel preacher,” Brother Reese said. He went on to say that some may be greater orators, and some may have more education, but “. . . I don’t believe there’s a man walking upon God’s footstool that’s got a purer life—any better record than he.”

Brother Reese used, as a basis of his remarks about Brother Copeland, a series of scriptures from the New Testament. In each case he read the scriptures, which are, in fact, commands to be obeyed. He then commented on the life of Brother Copeland as a living demonstration of one who lived according to the requirements of that scripture. Among the scriptures he used to depict the life of Brother Copeland were the following:

*Matthew 25:21*—“. . . Well done, thou good and faithful servant, . . .”

*1 Timothy 5:22*—“. . . Keep thyself pure.”

*2 Thessalonians 5:21*—“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

*Romans 12:21*—“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

*Philippians 2:14*—“Do all things without murmurings and disputings.”



*1 Corinthians 10:31*— “. . . whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

*Hebrews 13:1*—“Let brotherly love continue.”

In his unique manner and phrases, Brother Reese explained how these scriptures describe the life of Brother Copeland.

After Brother Reese's speech, there was an intermission during which there was singing. One very special song was sung by a quartet made up of Earl Womack, Libby Lamb, Lewis Lamb, and Carl Mick. The song was special because Brother Copeland had written the words and Earl Womack the music. The song was published by Stamps Quartet Music Company, Inc., in “Homeland Guide,” in 1954. In the poem, “We Shall Rise,” Brother Copeland expressed the hope of the resurrection, which shall be the ultimate victory.

The next speaker was Brother Edgar Lafferty who had known Brother Copeland since 1919. He described the work Brother Copeland had done in the communities of Liberty Hill, Crank's School House, and Midway. These communities are south of Hope in Hempstead County and north Lafayette County. He discussed his own association with Brother Copeland, and the ever-expanding influence of the preaching and life of Brother Copeland among the people of those communities. Some of the things Brother Lafferty presented are mentioned in Chapter V.

Erith Dixon, who spoke next, discussed the work that Brother Copeland did as an evangelist in widely scattered areas. Through the years he held meetings in Texas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

Following Brother Dixon, Milton Peebles talked about the Copeland family. He had been a friend of the family since he and Gilbert had become friends at Harding College in 1931 and 1932. Brother Peebles had preached at Cove, Arkansas, that morning, and had left

## No. 31

## We Shall Rise

Copyright, 1954, by Stamps Quartet Music Co., Inc., in "Homeland Guide"

J. A. Copeland

International Copyright Secured

Earl Womack

1. The seed is sown in - to the ground, With form or bod - y small;  
 2. The Son of God was al - so laid Be - neath the heav - y sod;  
 3. The Lord was placed in - side the tomb, His form was bur - ied there;

The germ of life with - in is found, Pro - vid - ing food for all.  
 To save poor man from all His sins, And lead Him home to God.  
 The grave was rent, could not Him hold, He 'rose our sins to bear.

## CHORUS

Tho' dark to us the grave may be, And dread - ful its em - brace;  
 earth - ly grave

We shall a - rise, the Sav - - ior see, And sing we're saved by grace.  
 bless - ed Sav - ior

Song written by J. A. Copeland and Earl Womack, sung at Billstown Reunion, August, 1954. (Used by permission.)

Cove after they had "dinner on the ground." He began by saying that he brought greetings to Brother Copeland, Sister Copeland, and the family from the people at Cove: from the Kelleys, the Bentons, the Ilshires, the Smedleys, and a number of others.

In his speech Peebles referred to and read from some notes which Brother Charlie Cannon of Saratoga had written about Brother Copeland. As far back as 1911 Brother Copeland was preaching at Saratoga once each month. Brother Cannon had said that even as a young man Brother Copeland was as steady and careful in his manner of life as a Christian could be. He truly spoke where the Bible speaks and was silent where the Bible is silent. In those days, Brother Cannon wrote, it was not unusual for a sermon to last an hour or even longer. But he never heard of any of Brother Copeland's listeners getting tired or complaining.

Brother Peebles told several interesting incidents about the family. He said that during the winter of 1931-32 he and Gilbert were in class at Harding College in which families with an only child were being discussed. He whispered to someone to mention to the class that Gilbert Copeland was an only child. That student reported it to the class, believing Milton was sincere. Gilbert sat tall in his chair and said, "Yes, I'm an only child; there were five before me and seven after me!" The class roared with laughter.

A brief history of the family was given, and a description of the life style of the family. He commented upon the endless sacrifices made by Sister Copeland while Brother Copeland was away preaching.

Brother Peebles said,

I know of no one in these fifty years that's done more for the cause of Christ in Arkansas than Brother Jady Copeland. Only judgment and eternity will reveal the sacrifices they have made and the good Brother Copeland and Sister Copeland have done.

He has had to take some stands, even among brethren, which were not popular. But he loved the truth. He took those stands for the cause and for the truth, in upholding the cause and the truth.

The reasons for Brother Copeland's success, Brother Peebles said, are: his great love of the Lord and love for the truth; his brilliant mind; his godly life; his good wife and fine family; the help and encouragement of good brethren; his knowledge of the scripture and his wisdom in teaching it; his hard work and many sacrifices; his great personality; his editorship of the *Gospel Light*; his fine countenance; his powerful voice, and his wonderful choice of words.

He went on to say,

These have been fifty great years for him, and for us who knew him and love him and his family. I want to say to him and his family—Thank you! for what you have done for us, and for the cause of Christ. And we want you to thank God, and take courage, and look forward to many years of great service here yet in the Master's Vineyard, and finally to a sweet by and by of eternal bliss and reward.

Brother Carl Mick, the Master of Ceremonies, then expressed appreciation to all for being there and to the speakers who were on the program. He asked if anyone else would like to say anything before he asked Brother Copeland to make any comments he wanted to make.

Brother Elbert Riley from Antoine made some impromptu remarks on behalf of his family and the church at Antoine.

Brother Copeland then rose to respond to the other speakers' comments. He said that when plans for this meeting were first started that he discouraged it.

I was afraid these brethren may do what they have done, say too much in my favor, and really try to honor me . . . that someone might think I was wanting some of this honor.

In his characteristic humility, he went on to say,

Now I appreciate every word of kindness that you have said about me, but I don't feel worthy of all that commendation. But I shall try to be humble, try to know myself, and one thing sure—I don't think I'll be exalted; if I could have lived up to what they have said, after all I'd only done my duty and have no right to be exalted.

But a few things have helped me greatly in the few good things that I have done, which when I look back, look like very few at times and my efforts have been feeble. I've had a lot of good friends and neighbors all over this country. I've lived in this country the greater part of my life. After they began to talk this meeting, people who were not members of the church would send me word commending the idea, and seemed to be glad of it. Such as that, of course, encouraged me.

Then, so many neighbors who have always been ready to help me, and a great brotherhood, the church of our Lord all over this country, I feel sure, have done more for me than I was worthy of. I have felt that way all the time.

I'm going to illustrate with one simple illustration, and then I'm going to close.

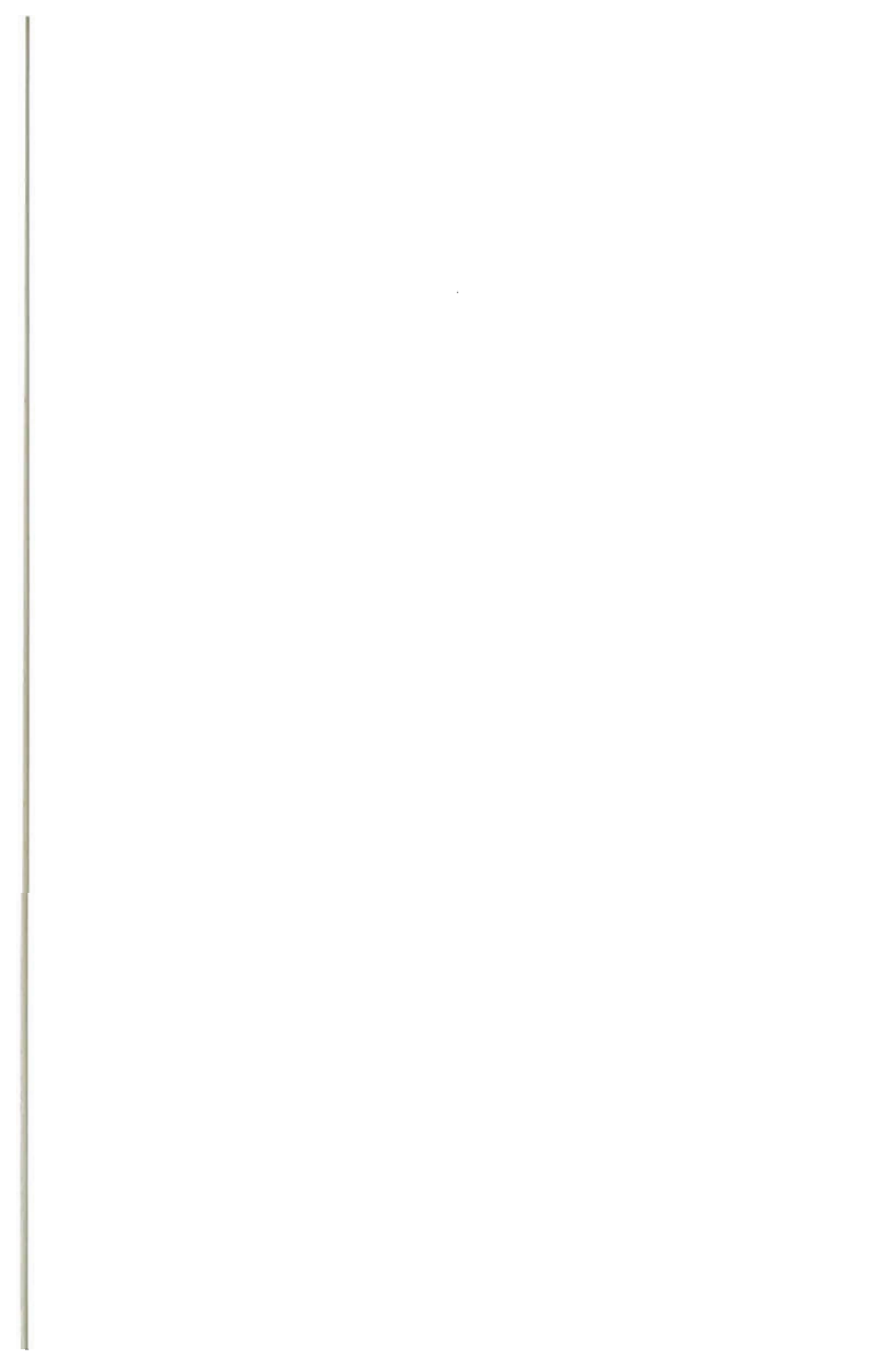
He then told the story of a rather bright boy who went to school. He graduated with the highest honors awarded by that school. During the graduation ceremony, when his award was given, he surprised everyone by refusing it. Instead, he went down to the first row in the audience, got his mother by the hand, and led her upon the stage. The young man said, "Mother made the sacrifices necessary and inspired me to go to school. If there is a medal, pin it on her—she deserves it."

With voice cracking with emotion, Brother Copeland said,

Besides this great brotherhood who has helped me so much, my friends and neighbors, no one has been worth as much to me as my companion [at this point he walked over to Sister Copeland and took her hand] who has stood by me all these years. And if you have any compliments (any medals), I'm going to say, Pin them on her; she deserves them. Staying at home, rearing that family, and caring for them, using wise

judgment in handling them and bringing them up so that every one of them has the greatest confidence in her. Therefore I say she deserves the medal, pin it on her.

This was an emotional climax which caught everyone by surprise.



## CHAPTER XIV

# The Silver Cord is Loosed

On Sunday, November 13, 1955, Brother Copeland filled his regular monthly appointment at Pleasant Hill. His subject was "The Mission of the Church." As the people were shaking hands and talking after the assembly was dismissed, Brother Lillard Billingsley, who had heard Brother Copeland preach many times in the past forty-seven years, said to him, "Well, Brother Copeland, you have delivered another sermon."

"In my feeble way," he answered with a grin. "If it is the Lord's will, I'll be with you all again the second Sunday in December." That was the last time he preached at Pleasant Hill.

The following Sunday, November 20, he filled his monthly appointment at Falcon, which is located twenty-six miles south of Prescott in Nevada County, on Highway 53. That afternoon he drove the forty-six miles back to Delight. When he arrived at home, Sister Copeland was over at Ruth's house, so he drove over there. He found, to his delight, that Ruth had company. Brother and Sister Jeff Wood and Brother and Sister H. E. McKibbon, who had been friends of the Copelands for more than fifty years, were there. They discussed the times long past when they all lived at Pleasant Home. Specific incidents were recalled and mentioned when



Brother Copeland was in his prime physically and at the height of his ability as a preacher.

While they were visiting, Sister Copeland asked, "Papa, what did you preach on this morning?" He replied that he had preached on "The Eldership." This, of course, led to comments by those present concerning the importance of that subject. The McKibbons and Woods soon left; Brother and Sister Copeland then went to their home. That night Ruth and Brother and Sister Copeland attended the worship service at Delight where they heard Brother Dillard Sarrett preach.

It was Thanksgiving week and they were looking forward to seeing the children and grandchildren. For several years all of the children had made a special effort to be at home either on Thanksgiving Day or Christmas Day, or both, if possible. On Wednesday afternoon Willie's youngest daughter, Margie, and her sixteen-month-old son came. Margie's husband, Jim Moran, was in the Air Force and Margie wanted to spend Thanksgiving with her grandparents and the rest of the family. Brother Copeland enjoyed their being there; he loved children, and laughed as he watched Vic learning to walk. He remarked that it seemed that "every step was an accident." Nineteen years later Vic was married on Brother and Sister Copeland's wedding anniversary.

Ruth, who lived just across the pasture, came over that day to talk about the plans for Thanksgiving Day. She was lonely; Langley had died in May, and Ruth was still mourning his death. Wendell, her youngest son, was the only one left at home with her.

Ruth always got up early. At 5:00 o'clock Thursday morning she was up, preparing for Thanksgiving dinner. The telephone rang; it was Sister Copeland. She wanted Ruth to come over right away because Brother Copeland was very sick. He had slept very little that night, but he did not awaken Sister Copeland. She had suffered so

much lately with arthritis he did not want to disturb her while she was sleeping so well.

After waking Wendell and instructing him to take her pies out of the oven at a certain time, Ruth hurried over to see about her father. After she got there, they called Dr. Floyd from Murfreesboro. He came, examined Brother Copeland, and questioned them about his symptoms. The doctor left some medicine, spoke words of encouragement and reassurance, and left. Jady Wilson arrived shortly after the doctor left. He had been in a meeting at Huntsville, Alabama, and had driven all night to be at home on Thanksgiving Day. Ruth was still there when he arrived about 6:30 a.m., just at daybreak. She fixed his breakfast before going back to her house to complete her work. The sun was just coming up as Ruth walked across the pasture to her house.

The family had planned to meet at Joy and Flanoy's house in Delight for Thanksgiving Day dinner. Ordinarily they met at the home place, but since Sister Copeland had been bothered more than usual lately with her arthritis, they had decided to meet at Joy's house. Six of the twelve children, with some members of their families, were together at Delight on that Thanksgiving Day. Ruth and Joy lived at Delight; Vida lived only twenty miles away at Prescott; Estelle and her family lived at Malvern at the time; Floy lived at Magnolia, which was approximately sixty-five miles from Delight. Jady Wilson was the only one present who lived any great distance from the home place. He lived at Center, Texas, but had been in a meeting in Alabama.

The out-of-town families began arriving at about 10 a.m. Vida drove alone from Prescott after dropping David off to go squirrel hunting in the river bottoms. Estelle and her family arrived at the home place at about the same time Vida arrived.

All were concerned about Brother Copeland. His appearance indicated that he was not well at all. They discussed what they should do; he insisted that he felt well enough to go to Joy's house with the others. In fact, he drove the car himself. They all went to Joy and Flanoy's house about 11 o'clock. Floy, Guy, and their children arrived at Joy's house a few minutes later.

All were happy to be together, although from time to time someone mentioned others who were not able to be there. In the kitchen where the ladies were preparing dinner, they talked in subdued tones about Papa's condition. Several who had not seen him for some weeks or months commented on his appearance. All agreed that they had never seen him when he appeared to be in such a poor physical condition.

In spite of this concern, the members of the family who were present were truly thankful to be together again. As usual, the spirit of Thanksgiving was something real—not just a formality and excuse for having a big dinner together. In the prayer before dinner, Brother Copeland expressed the deep feelings everyone had; as he prayed so earnestly in thanking God for the good life, each one present, once again, felt the effect of Brother Copeland's ability to bring them closer to their Heavenly Father.

Immediately after the prayer was finished, the noise level rose again. As the serving of plates began, everyone talked at the same time it seemed. Some moved into the living room after their plates were filled, since there was not enough room for all at the table. The house was filled with the happy sounds of a family re-united for Thanksgiving dinner.

The noise and confusion subsided gradually as children finished eating and hurried outside to play. The women soon began washing dishes, and some of the men settled in the living room to relax and to discuss the



J. A. Copeland, Wallace Alexander, Jady Wilson Copeland  
(Picture made day of Brother Copeland's death).

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football game that was to be on television that afternoon. In 1955 in that part of Arkansas, television was new. The Alexander family was one of the few who had a television set.

Sister Copeland, Mrs. Mary Alexander, and Ruth were sitting with the men in the living room while the others were still in the kitchen, finishing the dishes. Brother Copeland, sitting on the couch, became drowsy, nodded, then lay down on the couch and dozed a few minutes. He sat up again, and after about fifteen minutes, Sister Copeland suggested that he go ahead and lie down on the couch. She could see that he was still sleepy.

"No," he said, "someone else may want to sit here, too." About that time Joy came through the room.

"Joy," Sister Copeland said, "Make Papa lie down on the couch." Joy playfully put her arms around his neck and pulled him over. He then lifted his feet upon the couch and stretched out.



Joy started back to the kitchen; by the time she reached the dining room, Mrs. Alexander noticed Brother Copeland was gasping for breath.

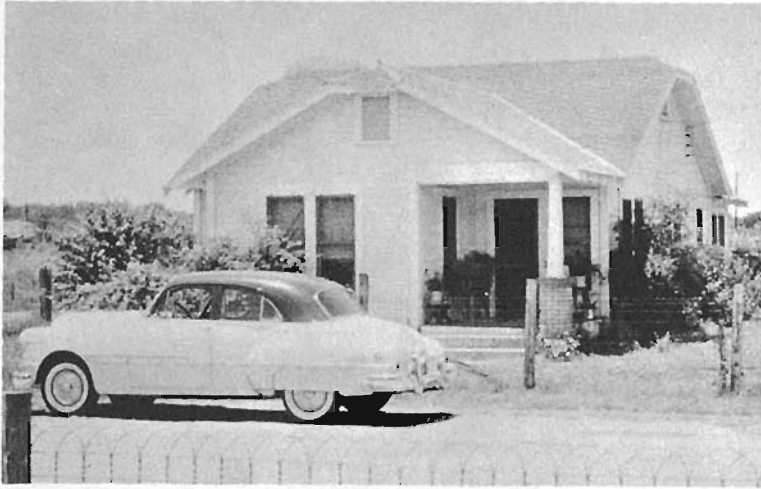
"Papa! What's wrong!," Sister Copeland exclaimed as she rushed to him. Jady Wilson, who had been watching television in the same room, got to him at the same time. They raised him up and took off his coat in an effort to revive him. He breathed heavily a few times, but did not speak. And then the final breath rushed past his lips, and that was all. The silver cord of life was loosed; the house of flesh released the spirit of this man of God. The body slumped, and those who loved him knew that he was gone.

As his spirit passed beyond, each felt the presence of the Lord. They knew, of course, that he could never die. He had a job to do while in the flesh; he came and did his work, and then he laid aside the flesh. He did not need it any more. The faith that he had taught them helped them now to understand that death is not an enemy to be feared. It is, instead, a friend who, when a life of work is done, breaks the chain that binds the human ship to earth, that it may sail on smoother seas.

They all knew that for Brother Copeland, as for the Apostle Paul, ". . . to die is gain;" ". . . to be with Christ, which is far better." He would have reminded them that they should "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." The poet has written:

"It is not well to weep because of death.  
Tears flow from hearts of flesh; the spirit never weeps.  
It is but selfishness that makes one wish  
To call again to earth departed souls."

A few minutes later, the body was moved to the bed in the front bedroom. In the hours that followed, grief reigned in the hearts of the members of the Copeland family. Flanoy assumed the responsibility of calling the



The Alexander Home where J. A. Copeland died.

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three brothers and three sisters not present: Elsie at Dyess; Willie in Meridian, Mississippi; Sweeney in Tyler, Texas; Gilbert in Wichita Falls, Texas; Ordis in Elk City, Oklahoma; and Oleva, whose family was visiting Gilbert and his family that day. As he called them, one by one, the same shock struck their hearts as they were forced to the realization that Papa had departed.

Each of the brothers and sisters had to let the members of their own families know the sad news. Eighteen of the forty grandchildren were married. There were thirty great-grandchildren at that time. At the time of his death, Brother and Sister Copeland had eighty-two living descendants.

Elsie, the oldest of those not present, was enjoying Thanksgiving at home with all of her children and grandchildren. Their joyous time ended with Flanoy's phone call. Elsie and several members of her family drove to Delight the next day. She was the last of the twelve to arrive.



J. A. Copeland's desk as he left it.  
(Picture taken the day he died.)

Willie, in Meridian, Mississippi, was alone when the news came to her. She, Charlene, J. L., Jr., and Johny drove from Meridian on Friday. Her other two children, Evelyn and Lawrence, lived in Canyon, Texas. They, too, drove to Delight on Friday. Margie was already at Delight.

Sweeney and Maude lived at Tyler, Texas. Their son, Jimmy, was in the Air Force at Amarillo Air Force Base, Texas, and did not get to go to the funeral. Jady Wilson, who was at Delight, lived at Center, Texas, at that time. He asked Sweeney to go by and get Dorothy and the children who were visiting friends at Longview. Sweeney, Maude, and Mrs. Brown, Maude's mother who was with them, drove to Longview, picked up Jady Wilson's family, and drove to Delight Thursday night. After stopping by Blevins to leave Mrs. Brown, they arrived at Delight at 11 p.m.

Ordis and his family, who lived at Elk City, Oklahoma, had visitors from Arkansas when they received news of the death. On Friday their friends came with them back to their home in Arkansas. Ordis arrived at Delight between 5:30 and 6:00 o'clock p.m. Friday.

Oleva and her family were visiting Gilbert and his family in Wichita Falls that Thanksgiving Day. After they received the message, Gilbert called Milton, their son who was in Abilene Christian College, before Oleva and John left to make the long trip back to Cleburne, Texas, where they lived. It was dark before they reached their home. They called Mary Frances Dye, Estelle's daughter who was in nurse's training in Dallas. Arrangements were made for her to ride with them Friday morning. Oleva and family left Cleburne about 6:00 o'clock Friday morning, stopped to pick up Mary Frances in Dallas and drove to Delight. They arrived about 11 a.m.

By 6:00 p.m. Friday all of the twelve children had arrived, along with most of the grandchildren. During the





The Delight Church building as it was in 1955. (Picture made in 1933.)

day Saturday, relatives and friends from far and near came. It was a mild day, not too cold; the weather was good. By 1:00 Saturday afternoon a great number of people had gathered; the big house was crowded and many stood in the front yard, talking in quiet voices. The embarrassment of mixed emotions showed on many faces, as friends and relatives greeted one another. They were happy to see each other, but sad because of the occasion which brought them together. Some had not seen each other for several years.

All of Brother Copeland's living brothers and sisters came for the funeral except Zeta. Only six of the forty grandchildren were not there. Many of Sister Copeland's relatives were there, and many, many relatives of relatives on both sides.

The funeral was held in the church building at Delight where Brother Copeland had preached so many times. The motorcade left the house at 2:00 p.m. There were so many people at the funeral that less than half of them were able to get into the building. Flanoy had put up loud speakers outside the building for the sake of those who could not get inside.

The pall bearers, all of whom were grandsons of Brother Copeland, sat behind a wall of flowers on the south side of the pulpit. The pall bearers were Bernie Lee, James, and Lynn Cox; J. L., Jr., Lawrence, and Johny Roberts; Milton Copeland; Wallace Alexander; and Wendell House. The singers, including Earl Womack, Walter Mansfield, Lewis Lamb, Ross Womack, Robert Newcomb, Parla Beavert, Evelyn Teel, Libby Lamb, and others, sat behind a wall of flowers on the north side of the pulpit. There were other singers from Delight, Pleasant Home, and other places. The following songs were sung during the funeral service: "Hold to God's Unchanging Hand," "Sweet Hour of Prayer," "As the Life of a Flower," and "Asleep in Jesus."

Brother Dillard Sarrett, the preacher at Delight at the time, read the first Psalm and the twenty-third Psalm, and said a few words. Brother Edgar O. Lafferty read the obituary and talked a few minutes. He was so overcome with emotion that he almost fainted, so his remarks were cut short. Brother Lafferty said that Brother Copeland had been his ideal; he expressed his love and admiration for him, and said he could not weep for Brother Copeland, but with his family who remained. The third speaker was Milton Peebles. He told of his respect for Brother Copeland as a second father, and of Gilbert's influence upon himself. He repeated some of the things he had said at Billstown in the summer of 1954, at the meeting held as a memorial to Brother Copeland's fifty years of preaching the gospel.

At the conclusion of the service, the people were permitted to pass by the opened casket to view for the last time the body of their departed friend and loved one. The procession, including those people who were outside the building, took a total of thirty minutes to pass by the casket.

The body was then taken to the cemetery at Pleasant Home to be buried. The movement of the great numbers of people and the tremendous number of flower arrangements required much time. By the time the family returned to Delight, it was dark.



Pleasant Home Cemetery where the body of J. A. Copeland was buried.

## CHAPTER XV

# The Ultimate Triumph

The worth of a life is ordinarily expressed in terms of the degree of success attained. What constitutes success, however, depends upon the standard by which it is measured. The common notion is that happiness and success flow from the possession of wealth, the absence of sorrow, the gratification of desires, and the possession of power, prestige, and influence. This is the standard set by the world.

True success, however, is not necessarily associated with, or the result of, material wealth or worldly power and influence. A completely different standard was taught by Jesus:

“And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” (Luke 12:15).

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21).

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26).

“He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matthew 10:39).

J. A. Copeland was a failure—according to the world’s standards of success. But he attained and enjoyed spiritual prosperity which is the outcome of pure character and a correct sense of values. He chose to live by God’s standards as taught by Jesus. Success according to the world’s standards would have meant failure for him. Triumph in Christ was more important to him.

Some of the key values included in God’s standard are expressed in what we call the Beatitudes which were given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Seven of the statements of Jesus are here applied to Brother Copeland’s life to illustrate his spiritual prosperity, and thus the degree of true success he achieved in life.

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matthew 5:3).

Although he had a healthy sense of self-respect, Brother Copeland recognized his dependence upon the grace of God. He did not, therefore, display a feeling of self-sufficiency. The man of the world is proud of his independence and self-reliance. Brother Copeland’s attitude was the opposite of this. He did not “think of himself more highly than he ought to think.” (Romans 12:3). The reader will recall that Brother Copeland demonstrated this sincere humility at the Billstown reunion in August, 1954. In his closing remarks he said, “Now I appreciate every word of kindness that you have said about me, but I don’t feel worthy of all that commendation.” And then, he climaxed the afternoon by saying, as he took Sister Copeland’s hand, “And if you have any compliments, any medals, I’m going to say, ‘Pin them on her; she deserves them’.”

He was, indeed, an humble man, one who was truly “poor in spirit.”

*“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”* (Matthew 5:4).

Sorrow is not blessed, but rather the comfort which God provides to the sorrowing. Where there is no grief, there can be no comfort. It has been said that the man who knows no sorrow is incomplete; one side of his nature has not been developed.

The special kind of sorrow of which Jesus spoke is sorrow over spiritual failure, sin, or spiritual poverty. The boasting Pharisee did not mourn or beat his breast like the penitent publican; neither did he enjoy the experience of justification. The prodigal son, in true contrition, acknowledged his sin: “Father, I have sinned.” Job said in his self-abasement, “Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

This mourning is not incompatible with rejoicing. Another of the ingredients of the happy life of Brother Copeland was his enjoyment of the comfort which God imparts to the contrite heart.

*“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”* (Matthew 5:5).

Meekness is not weakness. Essentially it is that attitude of mind which does not insist on its own rights, and is ready always to waive its privileges in the interest of others. One of the characteristics of love as described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 is that it “seeketh not its own,” or as one translation reads, “it does not insist on its own rights.”

Meekness is the gentleness of strength in reserve; therefore, with the inner strength which provides a sense of security, aggressive behavior is not needed. Brother Copeland’s life was characterized by a willingness to yield to others when principle was not at stake. He did not insist on having his own way; rather, he was always ready to give up his own plans to embrace God’s plans.

Correct

*“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”* (Matthew 5:6).

Jesus used the strongest physical needs of hunger and thirst to illustrate the passionate desire for righteousness and likeness to Christ which commands the life of one who fully responds to God. When happiness itself is the object of pursuit, it generally proves to be an elusive mirage. Jesus taught that when one makes righteousness—a right relationship with God—the goal of life, blessedness, or happiness, is obtained as well. This, too, describes the life which Brother Copeland lived.

The four characteristics given above indicate the ideal attitude toward God and His kingdom. The three following refer to one’s relationship with his fellow men. The person who is spiritually prosperous demonstrates a disposition of “strength with weakness at its mercy, purity in contact with defiling company,” and “love which sees others at variance.”

*“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”*  
(Matthew 5:7).

This is a self-acting law of the moral world. The man who shows mercy receives mercy. Like meekness, mercy is a distinctively Christian virtue, little known among non-Christian people. Mercy is shown to those who have no claim to it. When those who have a claim to mercy receive it, we call it justice.

Brother Copeland was a man of compassionate spirit, always ready to make allowances for those who had failed. He did not judge harshly; mercy knows no retaliation.

*“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”*  
(Matthew 5:8).

Seeing God is reserved for those of pure heart. Jesus used an inclusive term employed in its widest meaning—



purity of thought, imagination, motive, and act. He referred to moral holiness, inner purity, especially to one who is without guile.

Brother Copeland knew God; he enjoyed intimate fellowship with Him. With Christ in the heart as the indwelling fountain of purity, he maintained a clean heart. This made it possible for him to anticipate the day when he would see Christ face to face.

*“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”* (Matthew 5:9).

Notice that Jesus did not refer to peaceable men—those who are peace-keepers. Instead He referred to those who make peace in a situation where the peace has been broken. Making peace is much more difficult than maintaining peace. Because Brother Copeland lived in the presence of God, quarrels and discord seemed to die away in his presence. He had the reputation of a peace-maker, and was called upon many, many times to help settle difficulties among brethren in the church, as well as problems within families.

By living in harmony with God’s standards, Brother Copeland demonstrated the ideal character described by Jesus, our Lord. He truly reflected the Spirit of Christ in his individual life. Many who knew him look to Brother Copeland as a model of what the true Christian ought to be. As one strives to be conformed to the image of Christ, it is encouraging to look to the example set by a man like Brother Copeland. One can be brought closer to that goal by following his example. The prayer of each should be that “. . . we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Thus, J. A. Copeland lived and died, like the “way-worn traveler” he sang about so many, many times while rocking the babies to sleep:

"I heard the song of triumph, they sang upon that shore,  
Saying, Jesus has redeemed us, to suffer nevermore.  
Then casting his eyes backward, on the race which he had run,  
He shouted loud, **HOSANNA! DELIVERANCE HAS  
COME!**"

**APPENDIX**  
**CHRONOLOGY OF SOME OF THE IMPORTANT EVENTS**  
**IN THE LIFE OF J. A. COPELAND**

- 1881 April 23: J. A. Copeland was born at Corinth, Howard County, Arkansas
- 1882 January 20: Georgia Watkins was born near Murfreesboro, Arkansas (Hickory Plains)
- 1883 James D. Copeland homesteaded land in the Hickory Plains community
- 1888 James D. Copeland family lived one year at Nashville
- 1895 J. A. was baptized at Pleasant Home by Brother W. N. Thompson
- 1898 December 21: J. A. was married to Georgia Watkins
- 1899 December 18: Ruth Kansas Copeland, the first child of J. A. and Georgia Copeland, was born
- 1901 August 10: Elsie Clara, second daughter, was born
- 1903 April 29: Willie Nobia, third daughter, was born
- 1904 J. A. preached his first sermon at Billstown, (near Delight, Arkansas)
- 1905 March 23: Vida, fourth daughter, was born
- J. A. conducted his first meetings, one at Kirby and one at Billstown
- 1906 J. A. conducted a meeting at Corinth
- Bought the Stephens place at Pleasant Home
- 1907 May 26: Sweeney Roy, first son and fifth child, born
- Fall: Moved to Center Point for J. A. to attend school
- 1909 Spring: Moved back home from Center Point
- August 17: Felix Gilbert, second son, was born
- 1911 June 24: Myrtle Estelle, fifth daughter, seventh child, was born
- 1912 December 13: Thomas Clayton, eighth child, was born

- 1913 Summer: Ruth was baptized by Brother Isaac Lambert
- 1914 Summer: J. A. built new school house at Pleasant Home
- 1914 Summer: Elsie was baptized by Brother Skaggs
- October 12: Joy Fae and Floy Mae, ninth and tenth children, were born
- 1916 Summer: Willie was baptized
- November 26: Ruth was married to Langley House
- 1918 July 3: Ordis Dale, eleventh child, was born
- Summer: Vida was baptized by Brother Isaac Lambert
- 1919 Sweeney had typhoid fever
- 1920 January 9: Lucy Oleva, twelfth child, was born
- February 5: Willie was married to Jordan Roberts
- Spring: Family moved to the Harris place near Prescott to make a crop
- 1921 Elsie attended school at Texarkana while staying with her Aunt Bessie
- 1922 March: J. A. had a very serious illness
- August 28: Jady Wilson, thirteenth child, was born
- 1923 February 21: Elsie was married to Dewey Cox
- Summer: Sweeney was baptized by Brother Wainright
- December 24: Gilbert was baptized by his father (Lee Starnes held the meeting at Pleasant Home)
- December 27: James D. Copeland died at home
- 1924 Summer: Estelle was baptized by her father
- Fall: The family moved to Pleasant Hill, near Prescott
- 1925 July 5: Clayton was injured when he fell from a horse
- July 7: Clayton died
- 1927 January: The family moved to Delight
- 1928 March: Joy and Floy were baptized by their father

- 1929 Feb.-March: The family lived at Prescott for a short time  
 July 19: Vida was married to David Stuart  
 November 22: The Copeland's house burned  
 November 27: Sweeney was married to Maude Brown
- 1930 December: The **Gospel Light** was first published
- ~~1931~~ 1932 January: Nancy Kansas Copeland died at Delight  
 Summer: Ordis was baptized by his father  
 Fall: J. A. wrote "A Review of Jesse A. Mason's Tract on Instrumental Music"
- 1933 June: One Hundredth Anniversary of the establishment of the Old Antioch (Delight) church  
 July: Oleva was baptized by her father  
 October 21: Estelle was married to Bruce Dye
- 1934 May: Floy and Joy became the first of their family to graduate from high school  
 June 3: Gilbert was married to Otsy May  
 August 19: Joy was married to Flanoy Alexander
- 1936 Summer: Jady Wilson was baptized by Glen A. Parks
- 1937 January: **Gospel Light** became a weekly paper  
 August 29: Floy was married to Guy Tate
- 1938 September: The family moved to Hope
- 1942 July 3: Ordis was married to Aleatrice Freeze  
 October 27: Oleva was married to J. L. Cook
- 1944 October: Brother and Sister Copeland moved to Arp, Texas  
 October 19: J. L. Cook, Oleva's husband, died in France
- 1945 October 12: Jady Wilson was married to Dorothy Risley  
 December: Brother and Sister Copeland moved to Prescott
- 1947 February: Brother and Sister Copeland moved back to Delight  
 August 21: Oleva was married to John Reese

- 1948 December 25: Fiftieth wedding anniversary
- 1952 Spring and J. A. suffered serious illness  
Summer:
- 1954 August 22: Billstown Reunion: 50th anniversary of J. A.  
Copeland's first preaching
- 1955 November 24: Death of Brother J. A. Copeland

# Ancestry Chart of J. A. Copeland

1 *Jairus A. Copeland*  
 BORN April 23, 1881  
 WHERE Corinth, Arkansas  
 WHEN MARRIED Dec. 21, 1898  
 DIED November 24, 1955  
 WHERE Delight, Arkansas  
*Georgia F. Watkins*  
 NAME OF HUSBAND OR WIFE

2 *James D. Copeland*  
 BORN April 9, 1852  
 WHERE Corinth, Arkansas  
 WHEN MARRIED June 2, 1872  
 DIED December 27, 1923  
 WHERE Pleasant Home,  
 (Near Murfreesboro, Ark.)

3 *Nancy K. Womack*  
 BORN May 17, 1855  
 WHERE Corinth, Arkansas  
 DIED January 6, 1932  
 WHERE Delight, Arkansas

4 *Richard T. Copeland*  
 BORN February 22, 1815  
 WHERE South Carolina  
 WHEN MARRIED  
 DIED November 13, 1890  
 WHERE Howard County, Ark.

5 *Sarah McClure*  
 BORN January 1, 1817  
 WHERE South Carolina  
 DIED June 28, 1880  
 WHERE Corinth, Arkansas  
 (Howard County)

6 *Wade H. Womack*  
 BORN 1832  
 WHERE Bedford County, Tenn.  
 WHEN MARRIED About 1850  
 DIED 1863  
 WHERE In Confederate Army

7 *Sarah McFarland*  
 BORN 1831  
 WHERE  
 DIED  
 WHERE

8 *John Copeland*  
 BORN March, 1793  
 WHERE South Carolina  
 WHEN MARRIED 1812  
 DIED February 24, 1865  
 WHERE

9 *Sarah Massey*  
 BORN 1786 or 1789  
 WHERE South Carolina  
 DIED May, 1857  
 WHERE Moore County, Tenn.

10  
 BORN  
 WHERE  
 WHEN MARRIED  
 DIED  
 WHERE

11  
 BORN  
 WHERE  
 DIED  
 WHERE

12 *Michael Womack*  
 BORN 1794  
 WHERE Virginia  
 WHEN MARRIED 1815  
 DIED 1861  
 WHERE Hempstead County, Ark.  
 13 *Sarah Jones*

BORN 1795  
 WHERE South Carolina  
 DIED 1865  
 WHERE Bedford County, Tenn

14  
 BORN  
 WHERE  
 WHEN MARRIED  
 DIED  
 WHERE

15  
 BORN  
 WHERE  
 DIED  
 WHERE



# Ancestry Chart of Georgia (Watkins) Copeland

1 Georgia F. Watkins

BORN January 20, 1882  
 WHERE Murfreesboro, Ark.  
 WHEN MARRIED December 21, 1898  
 DIED July 21, 1972  
 WHERE Magnolia, Arkansas  
 Tairus A. Copeland

NAME OF HUSBAND OR WIFE

2 Wilson Collins Watkins

BORN Sept. 2, 1851  
 WHERE Georgia (Lumpkin)  
 WHEN MARRIED July 24, 1873  
 DIED January 4, 1886  
 WHERE Hickory Plains  
 (Near Murfreesboro, Ark)

3

BORN February 14, 1855  
 WHERE Lumpkin, Georgia  
 DIED May 31, 1944  
 WHERE Delight, Ark.

Emma Frances Hardie

4 Matthew Watkins

BORN (About 1817)  
 WHERE North Carolina  
 WHEN MARRIED  
 DIED  
 WHERE

5 Rebecca Hughes

BORN (About 1825)  
 WHERE Georgia  
 DIED Before 1880  
 WHERE

6 William M. Hardie

BORN Oct. 8, 1831  
 WHERE Lumpkin, Georgia  
 WHEN MARRIED  
 DIED Sept. 13, 1862  
 WHERE (In Civil War)

7 Eliza Kolb

BORN Oct. 3, 1831  
 WHERE Lumpkin, Georgia  
 DIED May 27, 1880  
 WHERE Howard County, Ark.