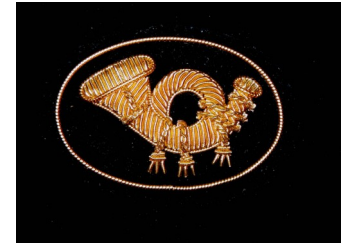


The Bugle



The Bugle, a publication of the Brentwood Historic Society

THE CITY OF BRENTWOOD IS ESTABLISHED

BY: PRESTON BAIN

Any fool can make history, but it takes a genius to write it.
- Oscar Wilde

I was reminded of that quote recently when I sat down to talk with John Oden about a book he is in the process of writing about Brentwood. Mr. Oden was born and raised in Brentwood and as such is armed with an intimate knowledge of Brentwood's early years. He shared with me many of the topics that are covered in the book as well as some personal history about the Oden family.

In 1815, the Oden family first shows up on the tax records in Williamson County in Thompson's Station. The family migrated to Brentwood a few years later and bought a large tract of land containing 404 acres. The Oden farm encompassed all of what is now Carondelet extending west over to Franklin Road. The small family cemetery at the Carondelet entrance on Wilson Pike remains deeded to the family today.

Thomas H. Oden, Sr., the author's great grandfather, was one of the original five trustees of the Brentwood United Methodist Church. The first "Brentwood Academy", as it was called, was located on the church property and Thomas H. Oden, Sr. was the president of that school. At that time the Methodist Church sat on Frier-



John Oden during a taped interview for the Brentwood History series. The DVD of that interview is available at the Brentwood Library.

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son Street where the Towne Centre Theatre sits today.

Dr. Solomon Fletcher Oden, son of Thomas H. Oden, Sr, was born in Brentwood in 1848. Dr. Oden practiced medicine in Brentwood for well over 50 years retiring around 1920. John Oden's father, Marion, was a pharmacist and went into business with Albert Noble, also a pharmacist, in 1929 opening a pharmacy at the corner of Franklin Road and Old Hickory Boulevard where Walgreens sits today.

Mr. Oden's book starts around 1850 when Brentwood as we know it today began to take shape. What could be considered downtown Brentwood prior to that time was off Old Smyrna Road near where the Cottonport home still stands today. Around 1850 the railroad came to Brentwood and the town center shifted and grew.

Seeing that the railroad was going to be coming through Brentwood, two competing

speculators created housing developments and began selling lots. Both of these speculators began lobbying the railroad to put a train depot in their development. The first development named Brentwood was created in 1855 and consisted of a little



Two early photos of Noble's Pharmacy. Below, Albert Noble (left) and Marion Oden inside the pharmacy.



more than 30 lots. It was located just north of Old Hickory Boulevard near where Target sits today. The second development named Villages of Brentwood was created in 1856 and consisted of 81 lots. This second development encompassed the area between Old Hickory Boulevard to the North, Hardscuffle/Church Street to the South, Franklin Road to the West, and to an area just east of the interstate today. Mr. Oden

has identified the location of a majority of these lots and has also drawn from memory a very detailed map of the stores and residences in this downtown area in the time between 1936 and 1950 which will be included in his book.

The railroad located the depot in the area

classmates, friends, and family. On July 24, Mr. McLean and a Historic Commission representative placed a historic marker at the site. Between planning, organizing, and execution, over 220 hours were devoted to Mr. McLean's Eagle Scout Project and it garnered accolades from the Brentwood Historic Commission and the Brentwood City Commission where he presented his completed project at the June 6th meeting.

Even though this project has successfully come to a close, Mr. McLean plans to continue his preservation efforts of this historic site. He hopes to work with professional archaeologists in the future to hopefully locate all of the gravesites that have been lost to the shadows of time.



A group of tired but proud volunteers take a break for a photo. Schultz McLean is in the back row as denoted by the arrow.

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Membership Levels-tax deductible	
___ Individual	\$ 15
___ Family	25
___ Contributing	50
___ Corporate/Benefactor	100+

Name	Address/Zip Code
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Phone	Email Address
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Detach this form and send, along with your check payable to:

Brentwood Historic Society; Attention: Linda Lynch; City of Brentwood, P.O. Box 788; Brentwood, TN 37024-0788

For more information: www.brentwood-tn.org/aboutus/history or Linda Lynch, City of Brentwood, 371-0060

The Brentwood Historic Society is a citizen organization supporting the Brentwood Historic Commission, the Boiling Spring Academy School Program, and dedicated to the study and preservation of Brentwood's history and culture.

had deposited their webs of forgetfulness upon it. The Beech Creek Baptist Church burned in the 1950's and the new church was relocated to the Bordeaux area in North Nashville.

Remnants of the foundation of the church and outhouse are still located in the underbrush closer to the road. I have it on good authority that the foundation made a great fort for area kids to play in years ago. It is amazing in all the tromping through the woods that these young explorers did that they never noticed the cemetery hidden amongst the trees and overgrowth.

Oral history says that Ophelia McClanahan donated the property in the 1890's. The church was established and built in 1906 with rocks located on Ms. McClanahan's property. Ms. McClanahan also donated the logs used to build the Johnson's Chapel United Methodist Church. As no early records of the church remain, it is thought that the core members of this new church were primarily former slaves from the area.

Mr. McLean took the initiative to contact the church and organize a joint cleaning

effort among himself, other scouts, and members of the Beech Creek Missionary Baptist Church. Several members of the youth group of the church turned out to help clean the cemetery and most of those volunteers had never seen the site before and were excited to recapture a long lost piece of their own history.



Mr. McLean and his team cleared and mulched a 150 yard hiking trail to the cemetery location. A large area of the cemetery was cleaned although only five grave markers were located. It is estimated there are approximately 50-80 gravesites in the

cemetery. At the end of the project's completion, more than one ton of mulch had been laid along the newly established path. This was no simple feat given that the restoration took place shortly after the floods, mandating the need for logistical changes in the staging area. Using Scales Elementary School as the new staging area for the supply drop off, Mr. McLean continued the successful execution of the project. The crew that weekend consisted of over 50 people, including Boy Scouts from Troop 1 and other troops in the area, Girl Scouts, Brentwood Historic Society members, Beech Creek Missionary Baptist Church Youth Group, BHS

of the second development (Villages of Brentwood) and the rest, as they say, is history. The first depot in Brentwood was actually a railroad boxcar on the side of the road. The first free standing depot building was built in 1860 near Church Street. This building also contained a post office and a grocery store at one point. As Brentwood continued to grow, a new depot was built in 1890 to replace the one built in 1860. Mr. Oden's book shows a rare photograph of both of these depot buildings alongside the railroad tracks in Brentwood. One of the depot buildings was still standing when Mr. Oden was a young boy though it was no longer in use as a depot. He remembers playing in the building as a boy. Prior to 1912 the

railroad through Brentwood was at ground level. Between 1912 and 1914 the railroad cut was made placing the tracks 50 feet or more below street level through downtown Brentwood. The depots became obsolete at that point and the buildings took on other uses over the years.

Another chapter in the book focuses on the development of the post office in Brentwood. The first official post office was called Good Springs Post Office and was located on the property of the present day

Brentwood Country Club. As Brentwood grew around the railroad, the post office took on the name of this new town and its first postmaster, George W. Simpson, was named in September of 1856. At that time, the building was located near the corner of Wilson Pike and Old Smyrna Road. Over time, the post office moved closer to the town center and was located in several places including the first railroad depot building off Church Street. In the 1930's, the post office moved into a building with a grocery owned by Albert Noble. The grocery store only stayed in business for a few years and when the grocery store closed, the post office moved to the pharmacy. Mr. Oden's father, Marion Oden, was a postmaster at this location.

The building that housed the grocery store and post office was moved back from Franklin Road and converted into a home for Albert Noble and his family. The building still stands today and houses the offices of Enterprise Rent-A-Car.

In 1936, John Oden worked as a "soda jerk" at Noble's Pharmacy. He remembers being at work on July 11, 1936 and smelling smoke. He walked out the front door of the building and watched as the Brentwood United Methodist Church burned to the



The first post office to bear the Brentwood name still stands near the intersection of Wilson Pike and Old Smyrna Road.

ground. Mr. Oden has photos of the building shell after the fire and photos of the newly built church after the incident.

Yet another chapter discusses the Interurban Railroad that operated between Franklin and Nashville. It was along the same concept as light rail today taking passengers from the suburbs to downtown Nashville making several stops a day in Brentwood. The Interurban began operating in 1908 and ceased operations in December of 1940. In the following years, the tracks were removed and the steel was used in the war effort. Remnants of the Interurban still exist today. Portions of a bridge still remain intact on the Legend’s golf course. One of the train stops, a simple stone structure covering a bench, still stands in the Meadowlake subdivision today. One of the powerhouse substations for the Interurban was located on the corner of Old Hickory Boulevard where the Shell Station is located today.



A photo of one of the railcars from the Nashville-Franklin Interurban Railway from the Bill Volkmer Collection

From 1900 to 1950, the population in Brentwood was declining but things were by no means slow. In 1947, Noble’s Restaurant was added to the existing pharmacy building. For the next 40 years it would remain the social center of town. In 1954, the Noble family built the Traveler’s Rest Inn adjacent to the restaurant on the South side. Many of the city’s most recognizable business landmarks sprang up during this time as well. Leed’s Store which was more of a general store was built in 1931 on the corner of Church Street and Wilson Pike. In 1949, Huff’s Grocery was built near the same intersection. The Pewitt Brothers opened their original garage in 1938. Gooch’s Television came to Brentwood in 1953. Though Beverly Gooch was in the television business, his father, Johnny Gooch, shared the shop and built handmade furniture. Johnny Gooch was a major league baseball catcher for the Pittsburgh Pirates, Cincinnati Reds and Boston Red Sox among others. While with the Pirates, he played in two World Series, winning in 1925 and losing to the New York Yankees in 1927. He opened his woodworking shop in 1953 after retiring from a successful baseball bat manufacturing business he had created in Nashville.

Probably the most intriguing part of the book was the focus on Brentwood nightlife from the 1920’s through the 1940’s. During that time period, several nightclubs lined portions

of Franklin Road. The most upscale of these clubs was The Palms. It straddled the Davidson/Williamson county line where the Exxon station and Corky’s Bar-B-Q are located today. This location served its customers well. During Prohibition, nightclubs were prone to raids by law enforcement. The Palms had a doorman who also served as the club’s lookout. When authorities from Davidson County came to raid the club, the doorman would inform everyone and they would move to the Williamson County side of the club and vice versa when the Williamson County authorities showed up. This club was so popular during its day that Dinah Shore performed at the club when she was a student at Vanderbilt University. A few yards South of the Palms on the same side of the street sat The Stork Club, another upscale nightclub. There were, of course, less upscale venues available in the Brentwood area.

One was located near where Target sits today on Old Hickory Boulevard on the Davidson County side of the line and was a known hangout of political personalities of the day and had the proverbial game room hidden in the back. There was also a nightclub on Wilson Pike Circle called the Tumble Down Shack that was frequented by many in the Hardscuffle community.

A section of Mr. Oden’s book will also look into the lives of many of the people that lived in Brentwood in the early years. The stories, photographs, and historical content of this book make it a must read for anyone interested in the history of our city.

This book is not yet published but hopefully will be available in the next 12-18 months. The Bugle will inform its readers when the book becomes available for purchase.

Local Scout Clears the Path of History

By: Preston Bain

Robert “Schultz” McLean, a local high school student and Boy Scout, recently undertook an historical project for his Eagle Scout award. The Eagle Scout is the highest rank attainable in the Boy Scout program. One of the requirements to earn this prestigious honor is a service project that the scout plans, organizes, leads, and manages. After searching for potential project ideas and having discussions with several members of the Historic Commis-

sion, he was presented with an opportunity that intrigued him—the Beech Creek Cemetery. The Historic Commission has been working on a multi-year project to identify and restore all of the cemeteries located in Brentwood. The location of the Beech Creek Cemetery had been previously identified but it was in a state of disrepair.

The cemetery had most likely not been visited regularly in several decades as the years