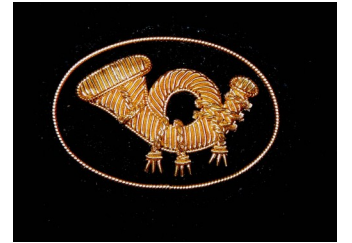


The Bugle

The Bugle, a publication of the Brentwood Historic Society



A Fallen Giant

BY: T. PRESTON BAIN

You would be hard pressed to find a citizen in Brentwood who was not familiar with the majestic Burr Oak that stood watch over the open field in front of the library. It stood strong and proud as the world around it evolved and developed. No doubt she enjoyed the many people who found solace and serenity by relaxing or reading underneath her outstretched canopy or the generations of families who joined her for an afternoon picnic. As each day drew to a close she cast her shadow all the way to the banks of the Little Harpeth as if saying goodnight to an old friend and even though she no longer casts a shadow, the memory she casted upon all who saw her will long remain.

The Burr Oak is a species of Oak in the White Oak variety. It is native to the Eastern and Midwestern portions of the United States and is the State Tree of Iowa. It is one of the most massive of oak tree species but one of the most slow growing as well with a growth rate of about one foot per

year when young. These trees are drought resistant and commonly live to be 200-300 years old with many, like ours, living significantly longer. The acorns are the largest of any North American oak as anyone who ambled by and picked one up over the years could attest.



*The Library Burr Oak as photographed on Sept. 27, 2009.
Photograph provided by The Brentwood Homepage*

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City officials had been watching the tree and had become concerned about its structural integrity in recent years. Dozens of experts and companies were approached about how to save the tree and prevent further deterioration. It was determined the best method for stabilization was a cabling system which was installed in early 2009. The tree, while still fragile, seemed to be stable with the new cabling system in place. Then, one night in late September 2009, the tree lost its first large limb during a thunderstorm. Now concerned about the structural integrity of the tree and the fact that the walking trail passed nearby, the city made the decision to install fencing around the tree to protect citizens from what would one day be its inevitable collapse. That proved to be excellent foresight in planning because eight months later, on July 21, 2010, another large limb fell from the tree. To the city's credit, the entirety of the fallen limb remained well within the fenced in area. It was by now a certainty that this once mighty oak had succumbed to old age. Four days later on July 25th two additional large limbs fell from the tree leaving only a portion of the trunk and one or two smaller limbs still intact. At that point it had become a safety hazard and was completely removed by the Fire Department over the course of the next few weeks. The tree was cut into managea-

ble portions and moved to the north parking lot of the library for any citizens who wanted to come by and procure a truly amazing piece of history.

Thankfully several skilled artisans procured large portions of the tree and were able to take its broken appearance and transform it into many wonderful works of art. Ray Sandusky, president of the Tennessee Association of Woodturners, had the bottom portion of the trunk delivered to his house to begin the transformation. Mr. Sandusky spoke to the Brentwood Morning Rotary Club at the beginning of 2011 showcasing many of the fine works of art he had created out of the fallen Oak. Bowls and ornamental vases of all shapes and sizes are just some of the artifacts created as a fervent reminder of her majestic beauty. The centerpiece of all the works of art created from the Burr Oak was a gavel which Mr. Sandusky created for the City of Brentwood and presented to Mayor Betsy Crossley during the Arbor Day celebration on April 9th. Though not a skilled artisan, I myself have a small limb of this tree and intend someday to carve it into something worthy of its magnificence but for now it sits as a silent reminder to the loss of an old friend.



Cabling System installed on the tree in early 2009. Photograph provided by the Brentwood Homepage

known for early camp meetings on the McCrory grant.

A “corner stone history” was compiled by a church member during the early 1900’s, and is contained within the cited book by Vance Little. This historic piece laments the lack of written history on this wonderful church, but heralds the oral tradition of its members. The work states, “It is recalled that the original building was in the woods lot just back of the present school building, and probably near the old graveyard in that lot. This was evidently a small building, for we are told that when the revivals are held, they took place in a grove on Little Harpeth...at that time people would come from long distance and camp for days at a time, and were stirred to great religious fervor and enthusiasm.”

The original log church succumbed to fire around 1850. A new church replaced it, and is said to have received an exterior weather board application, an indication of a fairly prosperous congregation. By the early 1900’s, this small church had become disorganized and without clear purpose. Fortunately, a new minister Eli C. Shelton came upon the scene. He thoroughly reinvigorated the group, culminating in the replacement of the old church with the facility that we see today at the site. The corner stone history relates, “We will soon dedicate to God our new church, and contract a debt of love and gratitude to Eli Shelton, which we and generations to follow us will never be able to pay.” The passage is dated May 17, 1925.

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___ Family	25
___ Contributing	50
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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.

Test your Wits

Just for fun, test your wits with some of the questions posed to the History Bowl student participants.

- 1. Who owned the tea dropped into the bay during the Boston Tea Party?
- 2. Where was the actual Battle of Bunker Hill fought?
- 3. What were the first and last states to ratify the Constitution?
- 4. What do George W. Bush, John Quincy Adams, and Rutherford B. Hayes all have in common?
- 5. Name three of the seven Presidents who had only daughters.

1. East India Tea Company 2. Breed's Hill 3. Delaware and Rhode Island 4. They lost the popular vote but won the Presidency 5. Jefferson, Truman, Johnson, Nixon, Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama.

Johnson Chapel Church - Wonderful
Reminder of Brentwood's Past
BY: JOE LASSUS

During these days of the massive megachurch, the Johnson Chapel United Methodist Church on High Lea Road is a quiet reminder of a simpler time in Brentwood. Fortunately, the church has very limited land available (1.6 acres) which will help preserve this valuable historic resource into the future. It would be impracticable under our current zoning laws to replace the church with a much larger modern house of worship.

Vance Little's volume *Historic Brentwood* states that the church, "...traces its history to the early 1800's when settlers came into the Granny White Pike area. Those early settlers included the families of Bond, Owen,

Spencer, Mayfield, Carpenter, and Edmiston."

Now a United Methodist Church, this house of worship was originally used by all denominations. Vance's work goes on to record that the church was thought to have been established in 1803 on part of the Colonel Thomas McCrory land grant. It is stated that Major John Johnstone purchased the site in 1796, and that his son Matthew built the first log church there. This created a permanent home for community worship that was formerly conducted in the various residences of the area. Early minister, Levin Edney, probably held the original services at the first church, and was

When the Burr Oak finally came down, the circumference of the massive tree measured an astounding 19 feet. Upon further inspection when the Oak was removed, it was determined that the tree withstood at least seven significant lightening strikes over the course of its life. Core samples taken from the tree by the Tennessee Forestry Department estimated its age to be between 330 and 380 years old. That means it knew over 1,400 seasons turning from Spring to Summer to Fall and back into Winter. As a historian, I was especially intrigued upon hearing its age and while looking at the remains one quiet afternoon, I stood in awe at all the historical events that occurred during the life of this tree, not the least of which was the birth of this great nation. If 380 years sounds like a long time, it certainly is. To put things in perspective, this mighty oak was potentially just a young sapling when Galileo stood trial for heresy in Rome for suggesting that the earth and planets revolved around the sun. In 1660 when Charles II became King of England, the oak would have already been a strong and vital tree. Over the next 300 plus years of its life the history of the world

would be shaped by the Great Plague of London, the discovery of Halley's Comet, Sir Isaac Newton's theory on the Laws of Gravity, the Salem Witch Trials, Benjamin Franklin proving that lightening is electricity using a kite and key, the Boston Tea Party, the American Revolution, the penning of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the founding of Fort Nashboro, the Admittance of Tennessee as the 16th state, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Industrial Revolution, the Great Depression, two World Wars, man walking on the moon, and too many other events to name.



Burr Oak after losing a limb on July 21, 2010.
Photograph provided by the Brentwood Homepage

This very oak tree was alive during the lifetimes of Rembrandt, John Milton, John Bunion, William Penn, Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, King George III, Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Daniel Boone, Paul Revere, Patrick Henry, George Washington, Thomas Paine, John Hancock, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Edison, and so many others who shaped history over the past several centuries.

From a local perspective, this oak stood in

quiet vigil over ancient Indian burial grounds, it watched as the first white settlers arrived in Middle Tennessee, its leaves waved to Andrew Jackson and his troops as they passed through Brentwood on their way to the Battle of New Orleans in 1812, it saw the growth of the country as the railroad line was placed nearby in the 1850's, it provided shade to the tired and hungry armies of both the North and South during the Civil War, it watched as Lipscomb Elementary School was built in 1866 and stood guard over the many children who would venture from the school down to the spring behind the library to fetch water. It saw the construction of the WSM tower across the street in 1932, the incorporation of the City of Brentwood in 1969, and the construction of a state of the art library facility in 1998. In fact, several homes were built on this site over the years and as noted above the old springhouse still stands behind the library. It was not too many years ago that the last home that stood on this site hung a tire swing from the massive Oak. I imagine that over the years this Oak provided countless smiles and laughter for young children.

As with the circle of life, death brings forth new life and new hope. Though this fallen monument leaves an empty hole in the fabric of our city a new hope has arisen in the form of a sapling, an offspring from the very tree whose loss we mourn. Over the years, many citizens have collected her acorns planting them and nurturing them in their own yards. It is one of those seed-

lings, donated to the City by Steve and Sheree Foster, that found its way home to the library on April 9th as the City of Brentwood celebrated Arbor Day. With a ceremony fitting of such an occasion, City officials and dozens of citizens came to see the new sapling that had been planted in the very spot where its mother once stood. There's no doubt this sapling has some mighty big roots to fill but it is my hope that for the next 350 years families will once again be able to witness her majesty and grace and return to picnic under her lush canopy of shade once more.



Ray Sandusky presenting Mayor Betsy Crossley with the gavel while standing next to the new sapling.



High Schools Square Off In Brentwood Historic Commission's Inaugural History Bowl

BY: LINDA LYNCH

The “Battle of the Woods” took to the classroom on February 17th at Brentwood City Hall for the Historic Commission’s inaugural History Bowl. The event featured junior class Advance Placement students from Brentwood and Ravenwood High Schools competing for the Sarah Bayrd American History Trophy. The trophy is named after the late Sarah Bayrd, a long-time Advanced Placement history teacher who inspired several generations of Brentwood students to love history.

and Archives, was the game show host.

The fast paced event featured four rounds of history questions in a format similar to popular quiz shows such as Jeopardy. A close battle was fought, but when the smoke cleared, Brentwood High School won brag-

ging rights and the trophy until the next Bowl.

The Brentwood Historic Commission hopes to create a greater awareness and love of history in young people by making the ‘History Bowl’ an exciting and fun event for the schools each year. You can watch the



Ravenwood - Venkata Amarthaluru, Kristina Atalla, Nick Erickson, James Fan, Nathan Fleetwood, Eli Gadd, Casey Huber; Brentwood - Emily Grant, Gentry Hannah, Jackie Mei, Kiersten Stanley, Olivia Sterling, Nathan Thomas, Michael Zoorob

first ‘History Bowl’ on Cable Channel 19 at 9 AM & 7 PM on Mondays, Wednesday & Fridays or anytime at the City’s website, www.brentwood-tn.org.

Retired News Channel 5 anchor Chris Clark moderated the event and Chuck Sherrill, Director of the TN State Library