

The Bugle

The Bugle, a publication of the Brentwood Historical Society



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BARKER FAMILY SAVES OLD BROOKS FARM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

BY JOE LASSUS

It was my great pleasure to meet Aaron and Teresa Barker last spring after their purchase of the Old Brooks Farm. In recent years the farm had deteriorated, and the community was in danger of losing this important historic site. But take heart, the Barker

family is intent on restoring this remarkable home and made tremendous progress during 2007.

As you may know, the property lies in south Brentwood between the Willowick and the Brentwood South subdivisions at the end of Old Brooks Road. The home and outbuildings sit on approximately twenty acres which help retain the beautiful pastoral setting.

This property was originally given to Thomas Spencer in a 1788 North Carolina land grant, and included the land where the Cool Springs Galleria Mall now thrives. The first white settler in Middle Tennessee, Spencer reportedly spent his first winter's residence in

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Post Office Box 788
Brentwood, Tennessee 37024-0788

OLD BROOKS FARM...(CONTINUED)

a hollowed out Sycamore tree near present day Gallatin. He was called “Big Foot Spencer” by the Indians due to the large size of his foot-prints.

James Brooks brought his family to William-son County in 1812, purchasing a large tract from Elizabeth Spencer, the sister of the origi-nal owner. William W. Brooks, presumably his brother, arrived in 1824 taking up residence at the site of the Willowick neighborhood. Wil-iam was a home builder and blacksmith, and likely assisted his brother, Alexander Brooks in the construction of the surviving family resi-dence on the adjoining property.

Alexander Brooks married Mary Jane McKay, daughter of John P. McKay, one of the Williamson County’s first settlers. The original log home consisted of two rooms, the down-stairs living room and upstairs bedroom on the south side of the current residence.



Prior to the Civil War, the main staircase, ground floor master bedroom, and another up-stairs bedroom were added to house. No doubt the traditional clapboard siding was applied at this point as was the fashion of the time period.

During the Civil War, the Old Brooks Farm was used as a battlefield hospital as were most larger homes of the time. The access to the adjacent railroad and the three natural springs on site made this home a natural depot for the soldiers. In December of 1864 (during the Battle of Nashville), the Bledsoe Battery under Brigadier General Stovalls’ command occu-pied the full property with their artil-ery encampment. The Army of Tennessee retreated through the Franklin Road corridor, and fought a delaying action nearby.

Many years later, the residence would be impacted by the Franklin



The Bugle, a publication of the Brentwood Historical Society (editor: Joe Lassus)

A citizen organization supporting the Brentwood Historic Commission, and dedicated to the study and preservation of the City’s history and culture.

For information and membership, contact the Brentwood Municipal Center at 371-0060, Linda Lynch, Community Relations Director, T. Vance Little, City Historian.

We’re on the web!! Go to: www.brentwood-tn.org ...click on “history” to find us!

Oral History Records !!! **(available at the Brentwood Library)**

If you enjoyed some of the oral history re-lated in this issue’s article on the Hardscuf-ple community, you are sure to enjoy the collection on hand at the Brentwood Li-brary. Notable Brentwood citizens have been recorded to preserve their special knowledge of our local history. Some of the individual recordings include Charlie Primm, Edgar Primm, Jim Murphy, Maggie Speight, Eddy Arnold, Vance Lit-tle, and Alex Noble, among others. Enjoy this collection!

the neighborhood. Bessie Bowers recalled, “We all had to walk to the well to get water, but that was a meeting place, where you visited with friends. It was a very cohesive neighborhood, like a family,” Bowers explained, “Everybody went to each other’s church, so it was hard to know who belonged to which one. We were all supportive of each other.”

Ada Daniels Collier was the ‘grandmother’ to the Hardscuffle community. She was born on Wilson Pike, and remembered attending a one-room school on Hardscuffle Road. That school-house had but one wood stove for heat, and a spring for drinking water. Those contributing to the oral history could not explain why the main roadway was named Hardscuffle, but perhaps the reason was obvious enough for those strug-gling in the first years of freedom on very rough ground.



BRENTWOOD RECOGNIZES BLACK HISTORY MONTH - A TALE OF THE ‘HARDSCUFFLE’ NEIGHBORHOOD

BY JOE LASSUS

This month the Brentwood Board of Commissioners will issue a proclamation in honor of Black History Month. The action will recognize the old Hardscuffle neighborhood that formed the heart of the historic black community in Brentwood. Historically, Hardscuffle Road occupied the modern alignment of Church Street East, and the neighborhood stretched into the current Town Center District, including along Frierson Street.

Following the Civil War, the freed blacks moved into this upland area and founded their community around two principal churches, the Mt. Lebanon Missionary Baptist Church and the Brooks Memorial Methodist Church. During the days of slavery, the blacks worshipped on the many plantations of the area, or sometimes in the ‘slave galleries’ of their masters’ white churches.

With the advent of freedom, the two new churches filled the spiritual world of the Hardscuffle residents. In *Historic Brentwood*, Vance Little records, “One of their first acts in Brentwood was to organize a church. In 1863, Larry Thompson, a Baptist preacher, called together Solomon Pointer, Rob Wilkins, and Lon Hunt to discuss the formation of a church.

They met under a large sugar maple tree on Hardscuffle Road and organized the Mt. Lebanon Missionary Baptist Church.”

Another black church would form after the Civil War, reflecting the strong Methodist denomination of Brentwood. That church would be known as the Brooks Memorial Methodist Church, and would share facilities with the Mt. Lebanon church until the congregation could afford its own building. In 1935, they acquired three acres on Frierson Street for this purpose. That church was recently renovated, and now serves as the Towne Centre Theatre on Frierson Street (see photo below).

Former residents of Hardscuffle were recorded as part of an oral history effort to help remember



The original core two-story two-room home is on the south side of the current structure - see rooms served by chimney pictured above and the interior living room pictured below. Detail of the smoke house log structure is pictured above right and on page 7 (license plates), and the pole barn is shown in photos middle, lower right, and page 2. The numbered joists demonstrate their origins from disassembled railroad box cars.



...OLD BROOKS FARM (CONTINUED)

Interurban Railroad when the home was moved one hundred feet in 1907 to make way for the commuter line. Service between Franklin and Nashville would continue between 1909 and 1941, and the tracks still lay in the front yard of the Brooks farm.

After many decades of ownership by the Brooks family, the farm was purchased in 1936 as a real estate investment by the Minton family. The Minton's sold the property on the day before the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941 to Mr. and Mrs. Tom Clarkson who occupied the farm throughout the balance of the 1900's.

The Clarkson family added a rear addition, enclosing the open walk between the old kitchen and the main house (see photo below). Mr. Clarkson worked for the railroad. When the railroad converted from wooden to metal box cars, he disassembled several discarded cars to build the existing pole barn (see photo on



page two). The slave quarters beside the barn was used as a chicken coop, and the old smokehouse served as storage (see photo above right).

Brentwood heartily applauds the current work of the Barker family in restoring this important historic site. There are so many memories that still survive the farmstead. One story recalling the past was related by Mrs. Betty Harper, wife of Herbert Harper, retired Executive Director of the Tennessee Historical Commission. Betty not only remembers the Old Brooks Place, but even recalls the other Brooks home that has been lost forever. She and her husband lived on an adjoining farm. Betty remembers that their cows got out once and wandered off to a neighbor's pasture where Westgate Commons now is. They had to drive the errant cows back home along a less busy Moores Lane.



BRENTWOOD HISTORIC COMMISSION PLANS FOR UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

BY JOE LASSUS

Your Brentwood Historic Commission is working hard in their current planning effort for the coming year. The board is composed of ten members, including Tom Bain, Arlene Cook, Carole Crigger, Anne Dunn, Mary Lou Gallagher, Anne Goad, Kathie Greaves, Sherry Hammond, Linda Hirsch, Sharon Wnuk, Gil Hutchinson, and Judy Lawing. City representatives Anne Dunn and Linda Lynch assist the board, as does City Historian Vance Little. Their energies are working toward three enjoyable events in coming months, and detailed information will be forthcoming.

City Historic Tour - City Historian Vance Little is very excited about an upcoming spring tour in late March or early April. Those attending would board a small bus to tour city

historic sites with him. Locations such as the Winstead Mansion, Liberty Church, Owen Chapel Church of Christ, Boiling Spring Academy, and the old WSM Radio Facility have been mentioned in early planning. The group would enjoy lunch with Vance at his Concord House residence.

Boiling Spring Academy-Spring Open House- The Brentwood Historic Commission plans an open house at Boiling Spring Academy in late April or early May. Members of the Brentwood Historic Society will be invited to this event that will highlight the new docent program. This interpretive program to help relate the history of the Boiling Spring Academy has just been initiated. You are sure to enjoy the day as our docents relate the special history of this school-house. The interpretive signs at the site will likewise be celebrated, and refreshments will be provided.

Hand Sewing as an Art Form - Hand sewing is an art form that is over 20,000 years old. Years ago, hand sewing was a way of life for every female. Not only could they mend garments but they were capable of many decorative arts, including embroidery, quilting, crochet needlework, and tatting. An anticipated event envisioned by Sharon Wnuk is being developed that would offer historic crafts instruction and demonstrations.

