

The Bugle



The Bugle, named for the first newspaper in Brentwood
-a publication of the Brentwood Historical Society

PAUL HARMON HOUSE ADDED TO NATIONAL REGISTER BY T. VANCE LITTLE

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Brentwood has another National Register Property. The Tennessee Historical Commission in a recent meeting voted unanimously to recommend the Paul Harmon house, at 1304 Wilson Pike, Brentwood for the National Register. The nomination will be passed

along to the National Park Service for final approval.

Brentwood already has 19 sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In order to be eligible for the National Register a site must be old, be constructed in an outstanding architectural style, and/or be associated with a significant historic event or historic person. The Harmon house qualified on the basis of its age and association with historic events and historic personages.

The Harmon House, called “24 Trees,” is associated with the earliest Middle Tennessee settlers.....



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PAUL HARMON HOUSE...(CONTINUED) BY T. VANCE LITTLE

the earliest Middle Tennessee settlers. It was built by Sarah Jane Leiper Smith and her husband Alexander Smith on a North Carolina grant to Mrs. Smith's father, who was James Leiper.

It was a bitter sweet love story. James Leiper came to Nashville in 1780 as a part of the James Robertson party. Nashville was settled in that year by two groups of settlers, one came by land, which was led by James Robertson, and the other came by water led by John Donelson. The Robert-

son party came from Upper East Tennessee and drove their cattle and livestock before them. Donelson brought his party down the Tennessee River, up the Ohio River, and down the Cumberland to the site of Fort Nashboro. The latter group was made up mostly of women and children, while the men and boys came with Robertson.

James Leiper was a member of the Robertson party, and Susan Drake was a member of the Donelson party. Both in their late teens or early 20's, they fell in love and were married by James Robertson. Theirs was the first marriage performed in what is now Middle Tennessee.

The couple had been married only a few months when James Leiper was killed during an Indian raid on Fort Nashboro. A few weeks later his wife gave birth to a daughter whom she named Sarah Jane Leiper. The mother too was later killed in an accident. For his bravery in defending the fort, Leiper was awarded a 640 acre land grant on the Little Harpeth River. It was bordered roughly by what is today Concord Road, Wilson Pike, and Franklin Road. The young Sarah Jane Leiper inherited this land grant.

At the age of 18, Sarah Jane Leiper married a promising young surveyor,



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!

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Fencing (continued)..

Allen praised the area's woodland pastures, macadamized throughways, masonry mansions, and their grand plantations, "strongly fenced in with high stone walls."

County deed books also establish this time period as one of transition for fencing. With the sale of property, surveyors noted the type of fencing that existed on the subject tract. Deed transfers and boundary descriptions of the mid-1800's began to show a prevalence of this type of fencing. Generally, it is difficult to date a particular rock fence from physical evidence due to the repetition of construction techniques over time, and the tendency to reuse rock in rebuilding and repair.

Harmon House (continued)..

by Brentwood builder Glenn Noble. He had a knack for finding and restoring historic properties. He restored it to a liveable condition and it was later purchased by Paul Harmon.

Other National Register properties in Brentwood are: Ravenswood, Mountview, Century Oak, Mooreland, Isola Bella, Owen Chapel Church of Christ, Green Pastures, Forge Seat, Holtland/Wildwood, Knox Crockett House, Windy Hill, Cottonport, Pleasant Hill, Boiling Spring Mound Site, Boiling Spring Academy, Owen-Primm House, Boxwood Hall, Maplelawn, and Wood Park.

SUMMER CELEBRATION OF ANTIQUES SET AT BRENTWOOD LIBRARY—AUGUST 27TH !!

Connie Sue Davenport is a most entertaining antiques appraiser who is scheduled for our summer event on August 27th from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. There is no cost for admission and the event is open to the public. Connie will appraise up to two items per person at \$5 per item (no guns or jewelry, please). Numbers will be taken at the door to decide the order of appraisal.

Please direct any questions to Betsy Crossley at gadogfan@comcast.net or 371-1880. Join us for a great event!!



FENCING..... (CONTINUED)

BY JOE LASSUS

generally a by-product of land clearing. One traveler recorded in 1821 that rail fences west of the Appalachians were frequently six to nine rails high and most prevalent.

The early settlers found that rail fences did have their limitations. First, some woods rotted quickly; also mid-summer pasture fires could burn significant sections of fencing, and when wood was in short supply, rail fences were sometimes stolen for fuel. A post and rail fence may have to be rebuilt as often as six times per century. Rail fences were easy to erect but difficult to maintain.

There were two options; either keep one-third of the farm in forest to maintain the rail fencing, or change to rock fencing. *Farmer's Cabinet* noted in 1836 that the change had two advantages, rock fencing was more durable and the construction material could be cleared from the fields, making them easier to till and more productive.

The various journals documented the new practice as solving the wood shortage problem in areas where rock and labor were readily available. They record that the transition began prior to the early 1840's. *American Agriculturist* editor A.B.

PAUL HARMON HOUSE... (CONTINUED)

BY T. VANCE LITTLE

Alexander Smith. He had been appointed by the Governor of North Carolina, along with two other men, to settle the disputed boundary between Tennessee and North Carolina.

The newly married couple set up their homestead on the Little Harpeth grant. During their married life they acquired additional land south of Concord Road that included what is today Twin Springs Subdivision and the Harmon property.



The Alexander Smiths had three daughters and at least two sons. They deeded to each of their children about 200 acres. One of the daughters, Elizabeth, married Denney Portfield Hadley. They built a home on their land which they called Hadleywood. Today it is known as Green Pastures and is the home of Cal Turner, Jr. Another daughter, Emeline, married Richard Christmas. They built the Franklin Pike home now known as Ashlawn and is the home of the Shamblins.

The third daughter, Susan Drake Smith, received the family home place, which is now the Harmon house, or 24 Trees. After the death of her husband Thomas Maury Petway, Susan Drake Smith Petway, married prominent Brentwood physician Dr. Southerland Shannon Mayfield.

The house stood in shambles for many years until it was discovered in the 1950's

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BRENTWOOD RECEIVES FIRST HISTORIC PRESERVATION EASEMENT

BY JOE LASSUS

Many of you have admired the historic “Fly House” on Wilson Pike just south of the entrance to Ravenwood High School. This Victorian farm house is a frame structure with white clapboard siding and decorative architectural features so typical of the late 1800’s. It was constructed in 1880 by the Gray family, and subsequently occupied by the Jones and Fly families. More recently, the home was the residence of the Hackett and then the Roberts families.

Recently, Dr. Phil Roberts advanced a proposal for this site that included residential development on adjoining acreage. With the guidance of the Brentwood Historic Commission, this proposal was refined to include a special historic preservation easement that would protect the Fly House in perpetuity while allowing the development of the adjoining tract for new single family homes.

Through the easement, the house will be



preserved by the current and all future owners in its present condition and configuration, although improvements, alterations, and additions that would not alter the house’s historic character may be made by the owner. Any such future changes must be reviewed and approved by the Brentwood Historic Commission prior to permitting.

A total of fifteen residential lots shall be created on 21.5 acres that extend east and south of the Fly House down to Split Log Road which provides access to the new neighborhood. A landscaped buffer will be planted between the historic home and new development. Dr. Phil Roberts is heartily commended for his great cooperation in advancing this first historic preservation easement in the City of Brentwood.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FENCING IN EARLY BRENTWOOD

BY JOE LASSUS

Early Middle Tennessee was subject to the open range tradition as carried across the Atlantic Ocean from Great Britain. English common law, and later American basic law, did not provide for any farming obligation to fence in livestock. Cattle were branded or earmarked, and left to roam at will.

Livestock of all kinds was accommodated in the woods surrounding cultivated fields. Cleared land was certainly at a premium in the early days. Due to the open range practice, early settlers were forced to enclose those areas of their homesteads needing protection from the wandering herds. The animals otherwise grazed down the corn plot, or the kitchen garden. Likewise, fences also defined and protected all types of community spaces, including churchyards and schools.

Cattlemen could not be held responsible for stock’s wanderings when a fence was inadequate to stop them. Early laws required land owners to erect a substantial barrier, or abandon any legal action against the herd owner. A related Kentucky law of the period stated, “..that if any horses, mares, cattle, hogs, sheep, or goats, shall break into any grounds, being enclosed with a strong and sound fence, five feet high, and so close, that the beasts breaking into the same, could not creep

through; or with a hedge, two feet high up a ditch three feet deep, and three feet broad, or instead of such a hedge, a rail fence of two feet and a half high...[that fence] shall be counted a lawful fence.” The legal system provided substantial penalties, including full damages, when marauding stock broke down a legal fence and damaged crops or possessions.

During the earliest years of the 1800’s rail fences were more common, and were

