

BRENTWOOD HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Green Hill

One of Brentwood's most prominent residents was Green Hill. It is to be noted that he was a man, and not a place. He lived at what is now Liberty Downs Subdivision. His home no longer stands, but another large home has been built on the site of the original home and on the same foundation. That home is now occupied by country singer Alan Jackson.

Green Hill was from a wealthy Virginia Tidewater family. They were communicants of the Church of England, and he was sent to England to be educated. The family moved to North Carolina, and when the Revolutionary War came along, Green Hill cast his lot with the Colonies.

He represented his county at the New Bern Conference of 1774 and was a member of every North Carolina Provincial Congress while he was a resident of the state. He enlisted as a private in the North Carolina Militia in 1781, then at the age of 40. He was later promoted to chaplain.

Other public service of Green Hill included his election as a Justice of the Peace in 1778, County Court Clerk in 1785, Council of State in 1783, and Delegate to the Confederation Congress in 1785. He also served as State Treasurer for the Halifax District of North Carolina from May, 1779 to May, 1785.

He and his family were ardent members of the Methodist movement and on first name basis with all the bigwigs in that movement. His home in North Carolina was the scene of several general Conferences of the Methodist Church. After the Methodist Church was officially organized in 1784, 20 Methodist preachers met in Green Hill's home in Louisburg, North Carolina, to plan the strategy for future growth of the Methodist Church in the South.

It's not real clear why Green Hill at the age of 50 plus and the father of 13 children, successful and well respected, would pull up stakes and move 500 miles to an area that was still wilderness and where Indian problems abounded. You can bet that he was not one step ahead of the law. He and his wife came to what was to become Brentwood on an exploratory trip to view his land. Four years later in 1798 they moved to Tennessee. He brought his wife and eight of his children with him. They stayed within the protection of Fort Nashboro until their house was completed.

For those who don't know, Conferences are a pretty big deal in the Methodist Church. The first one to be held west of the Alleghanies was held at the Brentwood home of Green Hill in 1808. The first two bishops in America (a pretty big deal too) Bishops Francis Asbury and William McKendree attended that

Conference.

The main item on the agenda at the Conference of 1808 was the formulation of a Church policy on slavery. The Church adopted a policy of opposing slavery. It is to be noted that Green Hill himself was then a slave owner and continued to own slaves until his death in 1826. In his will he said: "Respecting my colored people whom I now possess, it is my sincere desire that whenever Government shall permit, that they all be liberated for I consider slavery to be unjust and inconsistent with Spirit and Doctrine of the Gospel of Christ. But under present law we are restrained that liberty, therefore, until that desirable event shall take place I dispose of them as follows. . . ."

Green Hill was instrumental in founding the Liberty Methodist Church, one of the oldest churches in Tennessee. That church was the mother church of others in the Brentwood area, namely Smyrna Church (no longer in existence), Johnson Chapel, and Brentwood United Methodist Church.

Green Hill is buried in the cemetery just south of the home, which is enclosed in an ancient stone wall. The cemetery is maintained as a shrine by the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church. An historical marker marks the site. By the way, there used to be as historical marker dedicated to Green Hill on Franklin Road at Concord. It disappeared when the road was being widened. All parties in interest, mainly the Tennessee Department of Transportation and the Tennessee Historical Commission, disclaim any knowledge of the missing marker. If any of you readers know anything about the purloined marker, please let the Brentwood Historical Commission. We'll put your name in the newspaper as a reward.

journhill