

# WILSON PIKE UNDERPASS

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**The attached information was compiled from the following sources:**

- Historic Description by T. Vance Little.
- *When Cotton Was King on Concord Road*, by T. Vance Little, © 1999; pages 48 and 49.
- Photograph provided by T. Vance Little, original source unknown.

## Wilson Pike Underpass

Three narrow underpasses along Wilson Pike remind the travelers of a day when semi-trucks and long school buses were not anticipated for traveling Wilson Pike. They were built for horses and buggies.

The coming of the railroad changed the face of America in the early to mid 1800's. The new mobility gave rise to trade and travel and the growth of industry and the urbanization of America. It also gave rise to the birth of Brentwood, which was born of the railroad.

The first effort to raise money for building a railroad south out of Nashville through Williamson County was in 1831. The effort was not successful until 20 years later when the Nashville and Decatur Railroad was organized in 1852. The first call for capital went out in that year and resulted in raising \$200,000. The following Williamson County men were on the subscription committee: Thomas Park, R.G. Foster, John Marshall, J. W. Morton, D. B. Cliff, James Hazard Wilson, Sutherland Shannon Mayfield, J. H. Bond, R. Ogilvie, S. D. Foster, William P. Martin, A. Kinnard, and E. Thompson.

The next call for capital was in January, 1853. This call was followed by several more calls before sufficient capital was raised. The railroad was not completed to the Alabama line until 1859. The Brentwood Train Station was located near the intersection of Wilson Pike and Church Street. There was also nearby a large freight building.

In 1871, the railroad was leased to the Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company, under which management it continued to modern times.

The first railroad through Brentwood was at ground level. The steep incline made it difficult for longer trains to make the grade north of Brentwood. In the first decade of the 1900's a second railroad was constructed through Brentwood. It was at that time that the cut was made and the underpasses built along Wilson Pike.

The underpasses, as well as the one overpass which was originally just south of the fire station on Wilson Pike, were constructed at 90 degree angles to the railroad. Engineering technology at that time required this type of construction to furnish the strength to accommodate the trains.

The coming of the automobile made the underpasses obsolete, but they survived that invention for almost 100 years. At this writing plans are afoot to incorporate the one underpass located in Brentwood into the Brentwood Bike Way system.

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## CARRIAGE HILLS

**W**illiam Newell (also spelled Neville and a dozen other ways!) received North Carolina *Preemption Grant No. 138* in 1784. It was for 640 acres on the Little Harpeth River. It was bounded by Collinsworth and William Simpson properties. It lay south of what is now Moores Lane and mostly west of Wilson Pike.

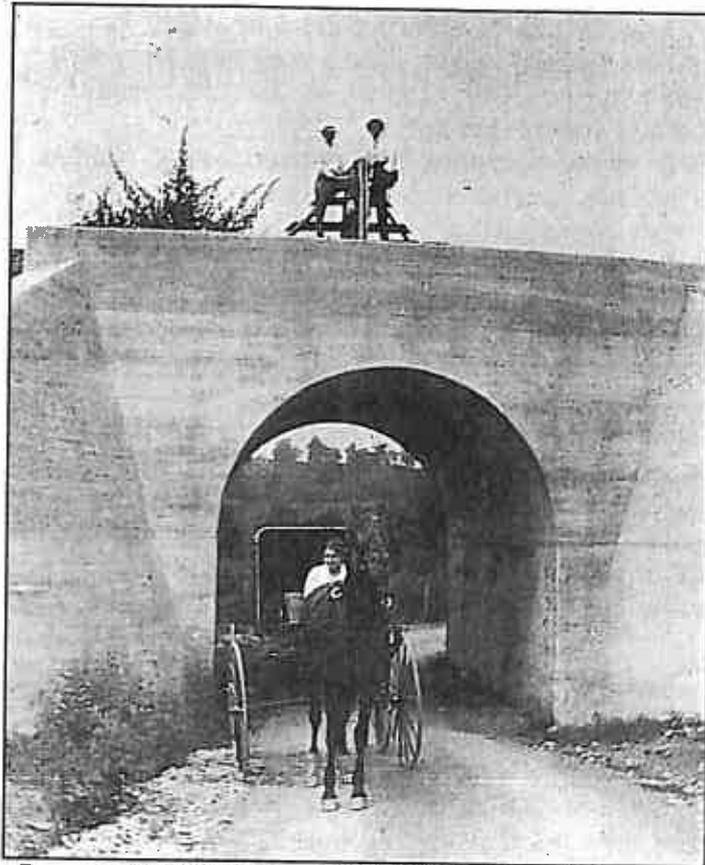
The grant did not stay long in Newell's hands. In 1789, he deeded it to one Edward Cheatham (spelled Catham). They were both described as being residents of Fayette County, Virginia. Cheatham deeded the property to Thomas Edmondson in 1800 who, in turn, deeded it to Jason Wilson the same year.

**T**he Wilsons were from County Fermanaugh, Ireland. Thomas and Katie Carson Wilson came to America in the 1700s. They had a son, James Hazard Wilson (1763-1838). James, in turn, had at least two sons, James Hazard II and Samuel D. Wilson. The former is the better known of the two, but both appeared to be large landowners in southern Brentwood.

Samuel D. Wilson (1796-1854) married Martha Davis and became one of the first Secretaries of the State of Texas.

**J**ames Hazard Wilson II (1800-1869) became one of Williamson County's richest men. In addition to extensive Tennessee holdings, he had holdings in Mississippi and owned sugar plantations in Louisiana. He owned a large amount of the Nashville and Decatur

Railroad stock, the same railroad that came through Brentwood in the early 1850s. He also owned a majority of the stock in the Harpeth Turnpike Company that built the road now known as Wilson Pike. Its original name was Harpeth Turnpike, but it took its official name from its owner. It was a toll road in those days.



*Buggy and underpass on Wilson Pike in the early 1900s.  
Photograph courtesy of Lee Engles' collection.*

When the Civil War came along, James Hazard Wilson II spent over \$10,000 equipping an entire company of the Confederate Army.

