

# OWEN'S BLACKSMITH SHOP

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

- Historic Description by T. Vance Little.
- *A Crossroads of the American Civil War*, by Joe Lassus with photo credit to Dick Dougall, July 2002.
- *Murder on the Wilson Pike*, by T. Vance Little, © 1996; pages 19, 20, 21 and 22.

## Owen's Blacksmith Shop

The genealogy of the log buildings on the northeast corner of Concord Road and Wilson Pike is not precisely known. They are thought to have been associated with several rather historic events in the area and may have been variously a store, a wagon making shop, and a blacksmith shop.

The area is thought to have been what is referred to historical records as Owen's Crossroads. The Owen family lived north and west of the area. It could have hardly been anywhere else.

We find mention of the area several times during the Civil War. It was involved in the considerable troop movements and foraging activities in the area.

One of the most interesting occurrences at Owen's Crossroads was the murder of John Edmondson. There was a *wagon maker's shop* at Owen Crossroads. John Edmondson was a well-to-do resident of the area who lived in the Owen-Primm House on Moores Lane. He had ordered for himself a *spring wagon*. One day he was in the vicinity of the shop and stopped in to check on the progress on the wagon.

An employee of the shop, W.A. Brown, confronted Edmondson and said, *Thank you for the recommendation you have been circulating through the county about me.* Edmondson responded that he had better things to do than to be talking about Brown. Then, Mr. Brown made the mistake of calling Edmondson a *darned liar*.

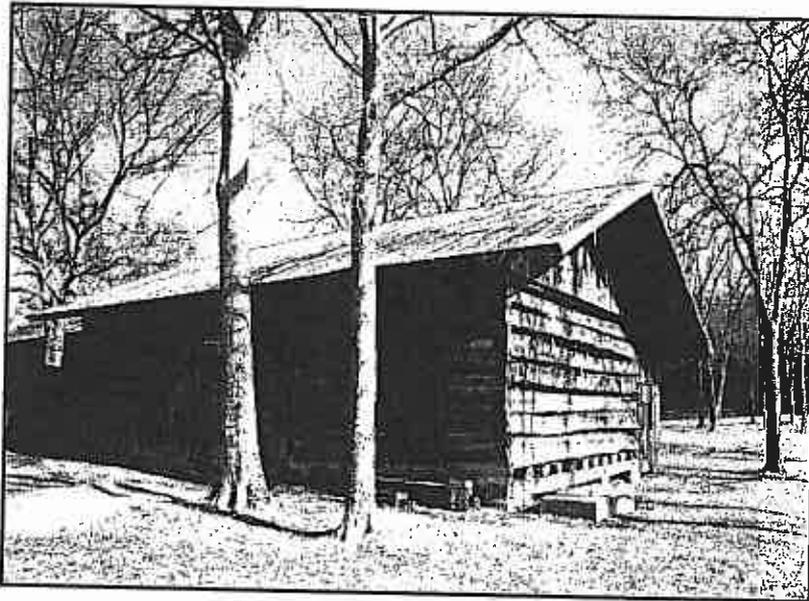
Not accustomed to have his integrity questioned, Edmondson picked up a *wagon spoke* and threw it at Brown. He retaliated by drawing his revolver and firing two shots into Edmondson's abdomen. He was still living the next day, but his physician reported to the newspaper that both shots were fatal, adding *he cannot recover*.

In one account Brown was described as a *desperate character*. Another account reported that he had *not been out of the penitentiary many years*. Both accounts agreed that he had *fled the county* and could not be found.

John Edmondson was indeed a prominent citizen. He was one of the Edmondsons of Edmondson Pike. He was 48 years old at the time of his untimely death. He had married Martha Virginia Owen, daughter of Jabez Owen, a prominent citizen of Brentwood, who had owned the Owen-Primm House where John Edmondson and his wife lived. They had acquired it from the other heirs at the death of Jabez Owen.

One of the most prominent men to live at Owen's Crossroads was John Edmondson Stephens. He grew up there and attended Lipscomb Academy. He went on to attend West Point Military Academy, graduating in the class of 1898. He taught on the faculty at West Point before seeing active military service in the Philippine Islands and Mexico. He served as commander of the 61<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Brigade during World War I and died on the battlefield in France in 1919. He had risen to the rank of Brigadier General at the time of his death.

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Owen's Blacksmith Shop stands at the site of the December 1, 1864 engagement between Confederate General Forrest and Union General J. H. Wilson. Forrest referred to the action as Owen's Crossroads while his artillery commander Captain Morton would term the exchange as Wilson's Crossroads. Following the battle, General Forrest visited the Owen home in what is now the Brentmeade subdivision.

Photo credits: Dick Dougal

## EDMONDSON KILLED AT WAGON SHOP

County Archivist Louise Lynch has come up with a name of another of the Wilson Pike murder victims. He was John Edmondson, who was killed at "a wagon-makers shop" at Owen's Crossroads (now the intersection of Wilson Pike and Concord Road). The murder occurred November 4, 1874.

It seems that John Edmondson, who was described in the newspaper account as highly respected with many warm friends, had ordered a "spring wagon" to be made at the shop. He went there around 3 o'clock in the afternoon to check on the progress of the wagon.

An employee of the shop, W.A. Brown, confronted Edmondson and said, "Thank you for the recommendation you have been circulating through the county about me." To which Edmondson responded that he had not been circulating anything at all. Then Mr. Brown made the mistake of calling Edmondson "a d\_\_\_\_\_ liar."

Not accustomed to having his integrity questioned, Edmondson picked up a "wagon spoke" and threw it at Brown. He retaliated by drawing his revolver and firing two shots into Edmondson's abdomen. He was still living the next day, but his physician, Dr. D.W. Carmack, reported to the newspaper, "Both shots are fatal, and he cannot recover."

In one account of Brown he was described as "a desparate (sic) character." Another report said that he had "not been out of the penitentiary many years." Both accounts agreed that he has "fled the county" and could not be found.

One account said that Edmondson owned the "blacksmith shop" and that Brown was an employee of his.

John Edmondson was indeed a prominent citizen. He was one of *the* Edmondsons. The family came to Williamson County in the 1790's and were one of the first families to settle here. And, obviously, they gave their family name to Edmondson Pike. They received the local land as grants from the State of North Carolina. They had fought in the Revolutionary War and participated in the Battle of Kings Mountain.

The victim was born in 1826, making him 48 at the time of his death. He was the son of William Edmondson and his wife Martha (Winstead) Edmondson. They owned land on what is now Liberty Church Road, and may have built the log part of the house that Larry Atema recently so beautifully restored.

In 1850, John Edmondson married Martha Virginia Owen, daughter of prominent area physician Jabez Owen. He built the house on Moores Lane,

### *Murder on the Wilson Pike*

now owned by the Primm family, across from the Indian Mound. The Owens had been around a while too and had amassed a sizable amount of land. They joined in a deed to the trustees of Boiling Springs Academy in 1851, deeding that land to be used as a private academy.

John Edmondson and his wife acquired the Moores Lane home from the other Owen heirs and made their home there. They were living there at the time of Edmondson's death. Mrs. Edmondson continued to live there.

In researching this John Edmondson, we stumbled across yet another Wilson Pike murder victim, he being Joshua Walter Owen. He was, if you can believe it, a brother to Martha Virginia Owen Edmondson, and, obviously the son of Dr. Jabez Owen. He was born in 1823 and met an untimely demise at the hands of "robbers on Wilson Pike" in May 1864. He had married Elizabeth L. McNish in 1848. She was also a Brentwood resident and lived in a home called "Brentwood," which reportedly gave Brentwood its name.

We don't have any details of the murder.



*Resting Place of Richard Owen Murdered in 1852*

## OWEN MAN KILLED BY BROTHER

**R**ichard A. Owen was not the most lovable character to ride his horse down Wilson Pike. In fact, he may have been one of the most disreputable of a long line of rascals. He led a life of debauchery that resulted in his untimely death at the hand of his own brother.

Richard A. Owen could not blame his poor character on being deprived in his younger years. He was the son of Dr. Jabez Owen, physician and planter. He owned hundreds of acres in the Moores Lane, Wilson Pike, and Concord Road areas. He was one of the wealthiest men in antebellum days in Williamson County. At the time of his death in 1850, he owned 58 slaves.

Violence was nothing new to the Owen family. Richard A. Owen's sister was married to John Edmondson, who was killed by a workman at a wagon-maker shop on Wilson Pike as previously reported. He had a brother, Joshua Walter Owen, who was "killed by robbers on the Wilson Pike" in 1864. That was another of Wilson Pike's 13 murders. There's still another one. His cousin Joshua Clark Owen killed a man named Felix G. Coffey at Brentwood in 1870. Still another murder.

In the 1840's, records show Richard A. Owen being in jail for the murder of an unknown victim. He contended that he could not go to trial because his chief witness was his brother Joshua W. Owen, who was in Mississippi on business. He claimed his brother would testify that he did not hit the victim hard enough to kill him. He apparently did not deny the assault with a stick.

In 1845, he was arrested and charged with assaulting one Eleazer B. Staggs. He may be the unknown victim referred to above.

In 1849, Richard A. Owen was sued by his wife Mary Z. Temple Owen for a divorce. She alleged that after 12 years of marriage he had driven her from their home and that it was not safe for her to return. She requested custody of their four children. She stated that their father was "not a suitable person to have custody." She further alleged that he was guilty of adultery. The suit also stated that Richard A. Owen owned "considerable property and was an heir of Jabez Owen."

On August 2 (or 6), 1852, Richard A. Owen was knifed to death by his brother Jabez Owen, Jr. He died of a stab wound to the chest. The murder reportedly occurred in one of the upstairs room at Forge Seat. He is buried in the Owen Cemetery on the corner of Crockett Road and Wilson Pike, near Forge Seat.

### *Murder on the Wilson Pike*

Jabez Owen, father of renegade Richard A. Owen, built the Primm House on Moores Lane (across from the Indian Mound). He lived there until the family moved to what is now the Lineberger place on Liberty Church Road at Concord Road. They bought and moved to Forge Seat in the 1830's.

Old man Jabez Owen appeared to be pretty cantankerous himself. In the early 1830's, he was party to the eviction of the congregation of Liberty Methodist Church from their church building on Liberty Church Road. He had leased the land to someone else who did the actual eviction, but it was clear that Jabez at least acquiesced in the matter.

There were several Owen families in the early days, all of whom appear to be related. All of them were prosperous and built some of Williamson County's finest homes, such as the Primm House on Moores Lane and Maplelawn (across from Crockett Springs Golf and Country Club). They also built two substantial homes that are no longer standing, one behind Lipscomb Elementary School and the other in what is now Brentmeade Subdivision. One of the Owen women married a Davis who built Mt. View (Ray Bell's home) on Franklin Road.

It all goes to show you that money ain't everything. It couldn't buy respectability for Richard Owen.