

# LIBERTY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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

- *Historic Brentwood*, by Vance Little, ©1985; pages 94 and 95.
- *When Cotton Was King On Concord Road*, by Vance Little, ©1999; pages 14 and 15.

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# Historic Churches

Brentwood is fortunate to have over 20 churches within its limits, the vast majority of which are of fairly recent origin. A few churches, however, have been in the Brentwood area for almost as long as it has been settled.

### Liberty Methodist Church

No doubt the first church in the Brentwood area was the Liberty Methodist Church. Although located between Brentwood and Nolensville, it became the mother church of churches in both areas. The fact that it was the church of early Brentwood residents is proven by Moore family records which reveal that Eleanor Moore, wife of early Brentwood settler, James Moore, died in 1809 and was buried at the Liberty Meeting House.

The Liberty Church was founded around 1800 by Green Hill, a Revolutionary War veteran and early Methodist leader, who came to Middle Tennessee in the late 1790's to take up a grant on what is now Concord Road. Hill was but one of several early Methodist leaders associated with the Liberty Church. The first trustees of the church included in addition to Green Hill, his son-in-law, Joshua Cannon, also a Methodist preacher; Benjamin Sewell, father of an early Methodist preacher; and Moses Spires (Spier or Spear), another Methodist preacher who came to Middle Tennessee in 1794.

Early Methodist itinerant preacher Lorenzo Dow mentions in his journal attending the Liberty Church in 1804 on his way from Ohio to Natchez, Mississippi. He said:

Camp meeting commenced at Liberty; here I saw the jerks; and some danced: a strange exercise indeed; however, it is involuntary, yet



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requires consent of the will, i.e. the people are taken jerking irresistably, and if they strive to resist it, it worries them much, yet is attended with no bodily pain, and those who are exercised to dance, (which in the pious seems an antidote to the jerks) if they resist, it brings beadness and barrenness over the mind; but when they yield to it they feel happy, although it is a great cross; there is a heavenly smile and solemnity on the countenance, which carries a great conviction to the minds of beholders; their eyes when dancing seem to be fixed upwards as if upon an invisible object, and they are lost to all below.

One of the brightest hours of the Liberty Church was in 1808, when it hosted the Western Conference of the Methodist Church. This conference was presided over by Bishops McKendree and Asbury and was the first annual conference held west of the Alleghenies.

The Liberty Church continues today. Although its membership through the years has never grown much beyond its original number, many of its present members are descendants of its founders.

**A**cross the road from the entrance to BONBROOK is the historic Liberty United Methodist Church. It is one of the oldest churches in Tennessee. Major Green Hill, who lived at nearby LIBERTY DOWNS Subdivision, founded the church in the late 1700s to early 1800s. He was an ordained Methodist minister and was instrumental in founding Methodism on the Tennessee frontier.

As a matter of fact, the original church building for Liberty was located on the land that is now BONBROOK Subdivision. It was located there until the 1830s when it moved to its location across the road.

There is an interesting little episode about the turn of events that precipitated the relocation of the church. Apparently, when the original church was built there around 1800, the property was not deeded to the trustees of the church. Some 30 years later, the then owner of the adjoining land took advantage of that little oversight and leased his land, including the church building, to a tenant farmer. The tenant *forthwith* began to use the church building for a hay shed!

Needless to say, the church members were outraged over the outlandish action of the owner and his tenant. They immediately brought legal action to evict the tenant and his hay. The trespassers refused to budge. John Hamer, who owned the land across the road, came to the rescue and deeded the church an acre of his land.

The present building was built at that time, and it still stands on the land deeded by John Hamer. It is believed that the original log building, which housed the church for its first 30 years, is at this writing located within a barn on the Larry Atema place, just north of the church.



The Liberty Methodist Church founded ca 1800. This building was built in the 1830s.