

JOHNSON CHAPEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Compiled by members of the Leadership Brentwood Class of 2008:

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The information was compiled from the following sources:

- *Historic Brentwood*, by Vance Little, ©1985; pages 99 and 100.
- *Granny White and Her Pumpkins*, by Vance Little, ©1993; pages 47 and 48.
- *Historical Markers of Williamson County*, by Rick Warwick, ©1999; page 19.

Johnson Chapel

Johnson Chapel United Methodist Church traces its history to the early 1800's when settlers came into the Granny White Pike area. Those early settlers included the families of Bond, Owen, Spencer, Mayfield, Carpenter, and Edmiston. Several members of this church are descendants of these families.

The church is thought to have been established in 1803 on a part of the Colonel Thomas McCrory land grant. Major John Johnstone purchased a part of the McCrory grant in 1796. His son, Matthew Johnstone, built the first church on this property. The spelling of the church name through the years has been changed from Johnston to Johnson. The land on which the church was built was deeded to the trustees of the church in 1831. At that time it was used by all denominations.

Before the church building was erected, settlers often held worship services in their homes, and an early minister, Levin Edney, held camp meetings on the McCrory grant. He is thought to be the first minister to hold services at Johnson Chapel.

The first church building was a log structure. In the summer, meetings were often held outdoors on the river bank, and many baptisms were held during the spring and summer months in a deep hole of cool water nearby under a great oak tree. The log church is reported to have burned around 1850. It was replaced with a weather-board building which was razed in 1925.

The present structure was built in 1925. Robert C. Forsythe served as chairman of the building committee, and many church members assisted in the construction of the church, which was designed as a cross. Mrs. Ophelia McClanahan donated many logs for the church, and her son, Lee, hauled them to Junius Morel's sawmill where they were sawed into planks. The structure was dedicated on May 27, 1925.

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**Johnson Chapel Church Reflects
Many Years of Attentive Care**

Brentwood has a number of historic churches. We have already recognized Owen Chapel Church of Christ, Brentwood United Methodist Church, and the late Boiling Springs Cumberland Presbyterian Church in this column. Before members of Johnson Chapel United Methodist Church demand equal time, we will devote some space to that church.

If you have not seen its picturesque interior, you should. It looks like what every country church in the world should look like. Its oak paneled wall, pews, and furnishings have "patina." They reflect years of attentive care. Long time member John Eckhardt tells us that because of its lovely interior, it is in great demand for weddings.

Johnson Chapel is indeed another of Brentwood's historic churches. The actual date of its founding is not known, but it may have been as early as 1803. It was built on a land grant to Colonel Thomas McCrory, one of the first settlers in the area. Major John Johnston (also spelled Johnson and Johnstone) bought a part of the land in 1796, and his son Matthew Johnston gave the land for Johnson Chapel Church. The land was deeded to the trustees of the church in 1831. In 1841 Matthew Johnston leased to the church for a period of five years land on the river bank to be used as a campground and for "the special purpose of worshipping the Almighty God."

Before the church building was built, Johnson Chapel was the site of a campground where religious services were held, called "Edney Campground," no doubt named for early Methodist minister Levin Edney who is thought to have been the first minister at Johnson Chapel.

The first church building at Johnson Chapel was a log structure. In summer meetings were held outdoors on the river bank. Baptisms were held during the spring and summer months in a deep hole of cool water nearby under a great oak tree. Winters were a bit too chilly for that sort

of activity. The log church is reported to have burned around 1850 and was replaced with a weatherboard building which was razed in 1925 when the present building was built.

Early settlers in the area who were members of Johnson Chapel included the families of Bond, Owen, Spencer, Mayfield, Carpenter, and Edmiston. One of the original trustees and Sunday School superintendent of the church was Harvey Tucker. In an early history of the church the following were named as members: "Harvey Tucker and wife Mary; Louis Castleman, and wife Eliza; John Lazenby and wife Sarah; Susan Tucker, formerly Susan Critchlow; J. B. Critchlow and Adeline Critchlow; Billy Morris; Eliza Carter; a family of Carpenters; W. A. Tucker and his four sisters whose names were Frances, Mary, Catherine and Rachel." Several members of the church today, including Mrs. Elizabeth Mayfield, are descendants of those pioneer families.

The present structure at Johnson Chapel was built under the leadership of minister Eli C. Shelton. At the dedication of the church in 1925 it was said of Rev. Shelton: "Under his able leadership and guidance, there was soon a new interest and enthusiasm manifested in both the church and Sunday school . . . When he mentioned the importance of a new church, he met with little encouragement, and where many would have become discouraged and given up, not so with Eli Shelton. Seemingly a defeat merely spurred him on to renewed and greater efforts . . ."

Church member Robert C. Forsythe served as chairman of the building committee. Many other members assisted in the construction of the church. Mrs. Ophelia McClanahan donated many logs for the church, and her son Lee hauled them to Junius Morel's sawmill where they were sawed into logs.

Johnson Chapel represents generations of good solid citizenry, their values, ideals and hard work. And it shows.

In March, 1930, the ladies of the Methodist Church served lunch at the Hereford cattle sale on Longview Farm (now Himmelfarb). The proceeds were applied to the church's Sunday School Annex fund.



Johnson Chapel

JOHNSON CHAPEL



Johnson Chapel was established about 1803 on part of Col. Thomas McCrory's property purchased by Maj. John Johnston in 1796. His son Matthew Johnston built the first church here. The land on which that log church stood was deeded to the trustees of the church in 1831, when it was being used by all denominations. Levin Edney, pioneer circuit rider preacher, held the first services here. The first church was destroyed by fire in 1850. This building, erected in 1925, is the third on the site.

ERECTED BY JOHNSON CHAPEL
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, 1992
WILLIAMSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Location: High Lea Road, Brentwood