

# The Bugle



The Bugle, a publication of the Brentwood Historical Society

## GERMANIC LOG BARN REFLECTS OUR AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE

BY JOE LASSUS

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Recently I had the pleasure to speak with architectural historian Vic Hood of Leatherwood. The very same consultant that expertly handled our Boiling Spring Academy restoration. We discussed a certain

log barn on the Beeler property that was brought to public light as a result of a new Elmbrooke residential development at Concord Road and Edmondson Pike. The barn is square, measuring approximately thirty feet by thirty feet.

Vic Hood assured me that this particular barn

**...this particular barn is one of the oldest existing outbuildings in Brentwood ..**

is one of the oldest existing outbuildings in Brentwood, and a most valuable historical asset given its unique characteristics. Vic related that the barn construction style goes back centuries and can be traced to Germanic settlers that populated the eastern states during the early



*Log barn construction using half-dovetail design was of Germanic origin*

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### GERMANIC LOG BARN...(CONTINUED)

days of our country.

The half dovetail notching design facilitated a very sturdy log assembly which was copied by the more numerous Scotch-Irish settlers of early Tennessee. This building mode was both durable and easy to assemble.

Vic went on to explain that the Germanic settlers from Moravia and Bohemia were numerous in historic Middle Tennessee. And, he feels that this barn is likely built by Germanic settlers due to the unique Roman



numeral numbering of the constituent logs in the structure (see photo below left). In his experience, the only other historic barns with such log numbering have been in Germanic communities. Vic states that Roman numerals were easily etched into the logs with a chisel, and this ease of labeling prompted the distinctive markings. The numbered logs facilitated a fairly common practice of relocating these barns.

Vic went on to note that the barn door design is also very unusual, and that it possesses very sophisticated hardware for Middle Tennessee at its projected date of construction (see photo on page 7). The log barn has been (continued on page 7)

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**A citizen organization supporting the Brentwood Historic Commission, and dedicated to the study and preservation of the City's history and culture.**

**For information and membership, contact the Brentwood Municipal Center at 371-0060, Linda Lynch, Community Relations Director, T. Vance Little, City Historian.**

**We're on the web!! Go to: [www.brentwood-tn.org](http://www.brentwood-tn.org) ...click on "history" to find us!**

#### *Germanic Log Barn continued...*

effectively preserved in recent decades as a much larger modern outbuilding was built over the log barn (see photo below left with log barn under modern tin canopy). The older barn is positioned under the center of the modern canopy building. We are most fortunate that the former owners decided to retain the log building for storage purposes.

The Brentwood Historic Commission was instrumental in negotiating with the developer Mark Marshall to ensure the preservation of the old log barn. We look forward to the time when the historic structure is re-assembled in the development's open space for all to observe.



### JOHNSON CHAPEL (CONTINUED)

book by Vance Little. This historic piece laments the lack of written history on this wonderful church, but heralds the oral tradition of its members. The work states, "It is recalled that the original building was in the woods lot just back of the present school building (photo on right), and probably near the old graveyard in that lot. This was evidently a small building, for we are told that when the revivals are held, they took place in a grove on Little Harpeth...at that time people would come from long distance and camp for days at a time, and were stirred to great religious fervor and enthusiasm."

The original log church succumbed to fire around 1850. A new church replaced it, and is said to have received an exterior weather board application, an indication of a fairly prosperous congregation. By the early 1900's, this small church had



become disorganized and without clear purpose. Fortunately, a new minister Eli C. Shelton came upon the scene. He thoroughly reinvigorated the group, culminating in the



replacement of the old church with the facility that we see today at the site. The corner stone history relates, "We will soon dedicate to God our new church, and contract a debt of love and gratitude to Eli Shelton, which we and generations to follow us will never be able to pay." The passage is dated May 17, 1925.

### Summer Event!!

The Brentwood Historical Society invites you to a barbeque social at the Cool Springs House on Sunday June 24th. We conclude the evening at the outdoor concert in adjoining Crockett Park. Mark your calendars; more info will be forthcoming...

### PRIMM PARK—BRENTWOOD'S HISTORIC LEGACY

BY LINDA LYNCH

A key historic resource was donated to the Brentwood community by Dorothy, Edgar and Charles Primm for a city park. This two acre site, located on Moores Lane, includes a prehistoric Native American Mound settlement (900-1500 A.D.) and the historic Boiling Spring Academy (1830). The park contains some of the most important historical and cultural resources in Tennessee.

The City obtained 29 acres of surrounding land to buffer the site from future encroachment. This additional land preserves the pastoral farmland along Moores Lane and provides acreage along the Little Harpeth River

for city's walking/bikeway system.

Renowned historic preservationist Vic Hood of Leatherwood, Inc. conducted the restoration of the Boiling Spring Academy. Hood has professional experience as an archeologist and is nationally known for his restoration projects.

In order to safeguard this valuable legacy, the City consulted with the State of Tennessee Archaeology Department, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, Tennessee Historic Commission, and many other knowledgeable individuals and organizations.

As urban areas grow, historical sites are quickly disappearing. This site in particular is a microcosm of Tennessee history representing prehistoric Native American culture and education of the 1800's. Brentwood is extremely fortunate that the Primms have



### ...PRIMM PARK (CONTINUED)

preserved this unique piece of the community's history and have dedicated it to the City.

Of late, the City has taken initial steps to place the restored Boiling Spring Academy into public use. The first exciting project relates to the historic schooldays program that has enjoyed its initial season. The photo on the preceding page shows schoolmarm Fran Abbagnaro



with her group of elementary school students who experienced learning as it would have been during the 1800's. Other teachers who have participated in the program include Connie Gee, Barbara Depp, Donna Miles, and Margie Imorde. These instructors have donated their valuable time and energy to relate our special history and heritage to these young Brentwood students. And what's more, they make this learning fun! Hat's off to this special group of ladies!

As you may have noticed, the City has carefully installed a small parking lot and entrance drive at Primm Park. A walking trail connects the parking lot and the Boiling Spring Academy building. In addition, new markers are placed along the trail to provide historic information to our visitors. These improvements were accomplished

with detailed planning to respect the Native American remains at the site. The Brentwood Historic Commission is now considering other ways to make the park available to the public while carefully respecting this tremendous legacy. More information on this subject will be forthcoming soon.

**Annual Dues**

You will be receiving a request for annual dues soon. These funds go to support our various events and historical preservation efforts. Please support us!

## JOHNSON CHAPEL CHURCH—WONDERFUL REMINDER OF BRENTWOOD'S PAST BY JOE LASSUS

During these days of the massive mega-church, the Johnson Chapel United Methodist Church on High Lea Road is a quiet reminder of a simpler time in Brentwood. A recent rezoning petition by the church to facilitate a small parking lot expansion renewed my interest in the facility. Fortunately, the church has very limited land available (1.6 acres) which will help preserve this valuable historic resource into the future. It would be impracticable under our current zoning laws to replace the church with a much larger modern house of worship.

Vance Little's volume *Historic Brentwood* states that the 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."

Now a United Methodist Church, this house of worship was originally used by all denominations. Vance's work goes on to record that the church was thought to have been established in 1803 on part of the Colonel Thomas McCrory land grant. It is stated that Major John Johnstone purchased the site in 1796, and that his son Matthew built the first log church there.

This created a permanent home for community worship that was formerly conducted in the various residences of the area. Early minister, Levin Edney, probably held the original services at the first church, and was known for early camp meetings on the McCrory grant.

A "corner stone history" was compiled by a church member during the early 1900's, and is contained within the cited

