

The Bugle



The Bugle, a publication of the Brentwood Historical Society

SPLIT LOG SCHOOL HOUSE IS RECALLED BY T. VANCE LITTLE

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Education got off to a slow start in Tennessee. There was no such thing as free public education as we know it today until well after the Civil War. Those who could afford it sent their children to private academies, such as the Boiling Spring Academy on

Moores Lane. Other people got together with their neighbors and pooled their resources and hired their own teacher. Such schools were called subscription schools. The state and county provided another very rudimentary kind of school called field or pauper schools. They were available to all at a small fee, but they went no further than the third grade.

...Still standing hidden by bushes and brambles on Split Log Road in Brentwood is a relic of the old school system...



The original Split Log School may have looked like this one-room log schoolhouse recorded by the Appalachian Museum.

After the Civil War, the Tennessee Legislature realized that the old slave based economy of the South was gone with the wind. They realized they had on their hands a large population of both blacks and whites who had to be educated to

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SPLIT LOG SCHOOL HOUSE...(CONTINUED) T. VANCE LITTLE

be prepared for their life in the New South. The Tennessee Legislature adopted a new Constitution that provided each county had to organize a public school system that provided for the education of both whites and blacks, albeit on a separate but equal basis.

We don't know the exact age of the Split Log School, but we do know that it dates back at least to the early 1850's. James W. Barnes wrote in his memoirs that he attended Split Log School when he was a child. He was born in 1843. He was before his death one of the oldest Confederate veterans living at that time. He recalled that his only book was the blueback speller. He also remembered that the school was taught by Pink Read. At that time his family was living on the Winstead Place, which is now the Governors Club. He was hired to carry bricks to build the Pleasant Hill Mansion (Governors Club Clubhouse), which was then under construction.

The original log school building burned and a new frame building was built ca 1888. Remnants of that building still stand hidden by bushes and brambles on Split Log Road (see photo above). It is a relic of the old one-room school days of Williamson County. It was built for the children of what was then called the Split Log Community of Williamson County.

Franklin resident, Elizabeth Burke Platts-



Remains of the Split Log School House (photo above).....

mier, attended that school. She wrote an article about the school which was published in the 1987 Williamson County Historical Journal. The article provides interesting information about the old school.

According to Mrs. Plattsmier, the extant building was predated by another building that was built of split logs. That is the source of the name of the school. She quotes Walter D. Ragsdale, now deceased, but a life long resident of the area. He said that his ancestor was instrumental in building the original building. The logs to build the structure were cut from timber grown on the Ragsdale land. He provided six mules, a wagon, and six hired hands to haul the logs and erect the school. It is likely that it was a subscription school.

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The Bugle, a publication of the Brentwood Historical Society (editor: Joe Lassus)

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 ...click on "history" to find us!



Mark your calendars now for the Brentwood Historic Home Tour!!

.. scheduled for the first weekend in October (7-8)

Inglehame Site (continued).....

small family plots near, and sometimes within, the homes of these Native Americans. All located burials were stone box grave interments. Middle Cumberland village sites usually contained a formal cemetery for the adult community members. The conjectured cemetery in this case is likely just outside of the immediate study area as the size and number of such a congregation of graves would have been quickly noted during the recent excavation.

The discovery also gives a hint of the prehistoric residential community. Thirty pit-like features were identified, and several of these are the remains of hearths which may have been located on the interior of domestic structures. Also, 215 post holes were discovered. Some of these form distinct alignments that are probably the re-

mains of residence walls. Seventeen potential structures were identified, but due to the limits of the investigation it is impossible to discern further buildings. Most of these patterns were thought to represent the remains of rectangular-shaped houses.

Thurston phase village sites were typically surrounded by a stockade or defensive palisade. No palisade line was identified during the investigation so the perimeter defenses were likely at some distance from the study acreage. The archeologists may have located one of the typical village plazas or commons though. Prehistoric artifacts and features were absent from one particular area of the acreage. It is conjectured by the study that this may have been a portion of a formal plaza or commons around which residential areas were typically organized.

SPLIT LOG SCHOOL HOUSE (CONTINUED) T. VANCE LITTLE

the organ, and they would sing, keeping them oblivious to the storm outside.

Additional money was raised by Ice Cream Suppers and Box Suppers. For those who do not know what a Box Supper was, the girls would fix food to go in a box and decorate it to attract bidders. Boxes were auctioned off to the boys who would have the privilege of eating the contents of the box with the girl who prepared the food. Frequently, the looks of the box were deceiving and did not necessarily reflect the beauty of the creator.

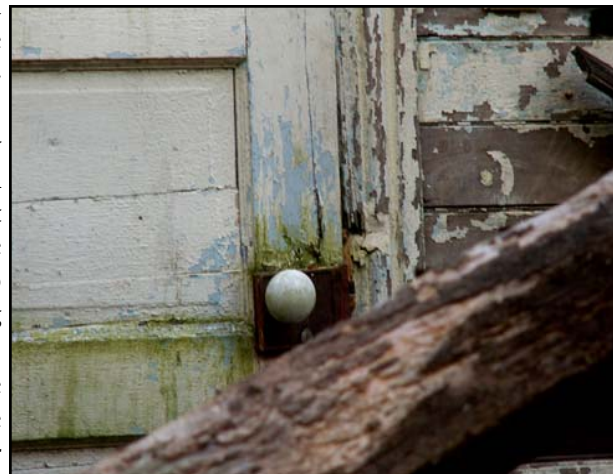
Miss Lora was also concerned about the spiritual life of her students at Split Log. When she learned that very few of them attended Sunday School, she organized a Sunday School in addition to her day school. She solicited the help of local churches and Scarritt College and brought in special speakers for Sunday services at Split Log. It was a successful program attracting a large number of people from the local community.

After the school closed, it was used by the local Split Log Home Demonstration Club, who kept it up for several years. It is also said that the benches from the Boiling Spring Academy were taken to Split Log School after Boiling Spring Academy closed.

Sarah Cawthon remembers that the Split Log School closed in 1949. She went there the first four years of her school life. Her teachers were Ethel Barnes McCoy and Mrs. Carl Smith-

son. The demise of Split Log School was caused by the consolidation of Williamson County schools and the institution of school bus service. A new school had been built at Lipscomb. Students were bused from Split Log to the new school. Other one-room schools were closed at this time, including the Mallory School which stood on Mallory Road near the railroad crossing. The first sleek new yellow school bus to travel Split Log Road was driven by Dan Whitehurst.

Split Log School is mostly just a memory. But its remains were recently discovered by Brentwood Planning Commission member Eric Fiedor. He called it to our attention and stirred up some memories. Miss Lora's bell calling the children in from recess has long been silent. But you can bet that her ghost is still there. It might be wearing a pink tutu.



...Remaining doorway between the schoolroom and kitchen.

BRENTWOOD LIBRARY HOSTS SOCIETY EVENT

BY JOE LASSUS



On March 12th, the Brentwood Library hosted members and friends for a most enjoyable gathering of the Brentwood Historical Society. Chuck Sherrill, the Brentwood Library Director, introduced the group to the Brentwood Room. This special part of the library is dedicated to local history, and also offers special resources for exploring family history.

Chuck Sherrill spoke before the group focusing on the interface between the city website (www.brentwood-tn.org) and the available historical resources of the Brentwood Room. The holdings can be previewed by traveling to the city website, then clicking on 'departments', then 'library', and then 'research'. The mentioned resources are then accessed by clicking on 'local history.' Library patrons can note the items of interest, and then visit the facility to review the hard copy holdings in the Brentwood Room.

Michael Moore of the Tennessee Division of Archeology addressed the membership on his

experiences during the library construction. As many know, a significant prehistoric Native American village was discovered on the library site. Mr. Moore was involved in documenting these findings on the project site.

He spoke on such subjects as the nature and extent of human graves on site totaling 66 burials, as well as the process for reburial of the prehistoric villagers. Mr. Moore presented a most interesting session that included the layout of the village on site and the mode of construction for the residences. The talk touched on details of the personal effects of the villagers, such as both decorative and functional pottery. He also noted the evidence of regional trade by the early inhabitants, showing items that would have originated at considerable distance.



Photo above left—Mary Lou Gallagher and Betsy Crossley discuss artifacts with Mary Herbert Pope. Photo above right—Prehistoric Native American pottery shards found prior to library construction.

SPLIT LOG SCHOOL HOUSE (CONTINUED) BY T. VANCE LITTLE

Mrs. Plattsmier recalls that it was a one-room school with an appended boxed-in porch that was the lunch room. It was one of the first schools in Williamson County to have a hot lunch program. James Cawthon, also a life long resident of the area, recalls that lunch at Split Log School cost ten cents.

There was a huge oak tree out back that shaded two toilets, one with a half moon and one with a full moon. There was also a big coal pile that provided fuel for the potbellied stove. It was the duty of one of the male students to come early and make a fire so the building would be warm when other students arrived.

Some of the teachers at Split Log School, according to Mrs. Plattsmier were: Cleo Smith, mother of journalist Robert Battle, Elva Farris, Willie Mae Bennett, Eva Patterson, Addie Eggleston, Alice Vaden, Addie Mae McKnight, Lis Joyce, Ethel Barnes McCoy, a local girl who had attended Split Log School, and Mrs. Carl Smithson.

By far the most colorful of teachers at Split Log was Mrs. Lora Fly. She was the wife of Mr. John Brown Fly. They lived in the house just south of Ravenwood High School, appropriately called the Fly House. This writer recalls when the white Flys lived in the big house, and the black Flys lived in the old Toll Gate House on the corner of Split Log Road and Wilson Pike.

Miss Lora Fly taught 24 years at Split Log. She also taught at Lipscomb Elementary School when it too was a one-room school. Majorie Ragsdale Hernandez, daughter of Earl and Louise Lane Ragsdale, also attended the Split

Log School. She remembers that Miss Lora Fly came to school in a buggy pulled by her spotted pony named Babe. She kept the horse in the pony shed all day until it was time to go home when she would hitch him up to the buggy and head toward home.

Miss Lora later drove a little green one-seater car. She would pick up her students on the way to school. When she arrived at school, the car was running over with kids. They were hanging out the windows and holding onto the running boards.

An interesting little story is told about Miss Lora in her early years of teaching. She was teaching in a large school system in Miami, Florida. When making teaching assignments for the year, the school administrator got a bit mixed up and scheduled Miss Lora to teach dancing. Those who remember Miss Lora know what a mismatch that would have been. Miss Lora was not very graceful and her figure was hardly fitted for wearing a tutu.

Mrs. Plattsmier remembers that for recreation Miss Lora would divide the school into two groups. One group would go ahead to the woods across the road. After a while the second group would set out trying to follow the trail of the first group.

At one point it was decided that students needed a little instrumental music to accompany their singing. Several women in the neighborhood sold hens to buy a pump organ. Miss Lora could not dance but she played a mean organ. Mrs. Hernandez remembers that when a storm came up, Miss Lora would play

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INGLEHAME - SITE OF SIGNIFICANT BRENTWOOD PREHISTORIC VILLAGE BY JOE LASSUS

In our last issue, I alerted the membership of an important prehistoric discovery unearthed at the developing Inglehame Farms residential subdivision. One six acre section of the development in fairly close proximity to Split Log Road is the site of this find. Inglehame Farms is situated in a largely upland area at the head waters of the Little Harpeth River. Until recently, most of this area was predominantly rural, consisting of small farms interspersed between undeveloped and forested uplands. In recent years, urban expansion has rapidly transformed the local landscape, primarily through the construction of up-scale planned community developments, such as Inglehame Farms. Such development activity has revealed some of the long lost history of the former Native American inhabitants of the area.

The archaeological report on the find produced by A. Merrill Dicks of DuVall & Associates reports the discovery of a large prehistoric village that dates to the Middle Mississippian Thurston Phase (ca. A.D. 1250-1450). Material remains from this era are typical of those found including utilitarian and non-utilitarian ceramics, small triangular projectile points, and rectangular, wall-trench houses. Subsistence of these populations were varied but generally included some combination of hunting and gathering of wild food resources, and agricultural food production that in some instances included the intensive cultivation and consumption of maize, beans, and squash.

The study relates that natural preservation of the prehistoric context within the site are found to be highly variable, ranging from poorly preserved to extremely well preserved. Human burials are located in all but three of the seventeen test trenches excavated on the site. The archeologists project high certainty of a large number of additional human burials in the intervening, unsampled areas.

With the exception of two adult graves which are clearly clustered, the remaining 29 grave sites are widely scattered throughout the study acreage. This pattern is typical of such village sites where children were very often interred in what were probably

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