

The Bugle

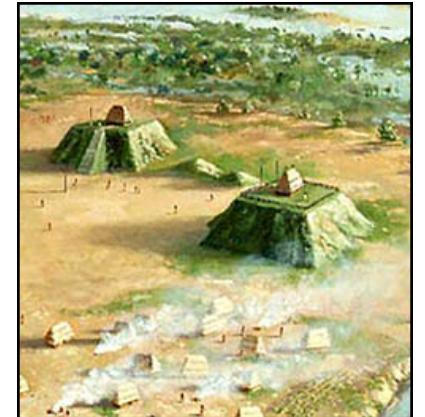


The Bugle, named for the first newspaper in Brentwood
-a publication of the Brentwood Historical Society

WILLIAM MYER, ARCHEOLOGICAL PIONEER AT THE FEWKES GROUP

BY JOE LASSUS

Dr. Kevin Smith of Middle Tennessee State University has been assisting the City of Brentwood in its recent restoration activities at the Boiling Spring Academy. Dr. Smith has also been active of late in documenting the life and accomplishments of the early archeologist, William Myer. Myer researched the Fewkes Group (mounds) in Brentwood during the early 1920's. As you may know, the Fewkes Group surrounds the Boiling Springs Academy structure at Primm Park on Moores Lane.



Representation of earthen mounds built by Native Americans during the Mississippian Era. Southeast Archeological Center

Archeological Society Newsletter), Dr. Smith writes, “..Willaim Edward Myer was a leading figure in the transformation of Tennessee archeology from a casual hobby to a professional science. In a very per-

In his recent scholarly article, *Bringing to Light Our Ancient Remains, The Lost Years – 1900-1933* (Middle Cumberland

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-a publication of the
Brentwood Historical Society
Post Office Box 788
Brentwood, Tennessee 37024-0788

WILLIAM MYER, ARCHEOLOGIST (CONTINUED)

sonal fashion, his career mirrors the beginnings of the broad transition of archeology from an antiquarian hobby to a scientific discipline...Myer was among the first in the state involved in systematic efforts to identify, protect, and preserve important archeological sites throughout the state."

"Myer died of a heart attack in late 1923, and his work on the Fewkes Mounds, *Two Prehistoric Villages in Middle Tennessee*, would be published posthumously."

William Myer (1862-1923), a native of Kentucky, moved to Carthage, Tennessee as a young boy, and spent the balance of his life there. He studied at Vanderbilt University, pursuing the disciplines of business, transportation, engineering, and archeology. By 1915, Myer would retire from his practical commercial career to devote all his energies to researching the prehistory of the Cumberland River valley. Though interrupted by his service during World War I, Myer would eventually receive the appointment of "special archeologist" with the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology.

Dr. Smith notes in his article that Myer mapped, surveyed, and conducted field work at numerous prehistoric sites in Middle Tennessee during the period 1919 to 1923. Those sites include Mound Bottom in Cheatham County, Gordontown in

Davidson County, Castalian Springs in Sumner County, Pinson Mounds in Madison County, and Fewkes Mounds in Williamson County.



Dr. Kevin Smith has coordinated recent archeological surveys in conjunction with the recent restoration of the Boiling Spring Academy structure.

Sadly, Myer died of a heart attack in late 1923, and his work on the Fewkes Mounds, *Two Prehistoric Villages in Middle Tennessee*, would be published posthumously. J. Walter Fewkes, Chief Ethnologist of the Smithsonian Institution stated, "I regarded Mr. Myer as one of our most enthusiastic archeologists and a most valuable member of my staff." Dr. Smith conjectures in his article that, "...it appears likely that had Myer survived for another decade or more and completed his many works in progress, his name might well now be remembered nationally alongside others of the era..."

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A publication of the Brentwood
Historical Society

A citizen organization of the
City of Brentwood, Brentwood
Historic Commission, 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!

Brentwood Historical Society Executive Council Members to Step Down

As many of you are aware, the Brentwood Historical Society has been very ably served during recent years by Executive Council members **Suzanne Burns, Wendell Edison, Jim Hackett, and Sue Ross**. These individuals have donated considerable time and energy toward the many activities and projects of the Brentwood Historical Society. However, personal interests and obligations have prompted those special members to now retire from the many responsibilities of the board. Suzanne, Wendell, Jim and Sue will continue as active members of the Brentwood Historical Society, enjoying your company at our events in years to come. They will be passing the torch, so to speak, at the August event detailed below. Of course, we wish them all the best in their newest pursuits, and thank each of them for their valuable efforts.

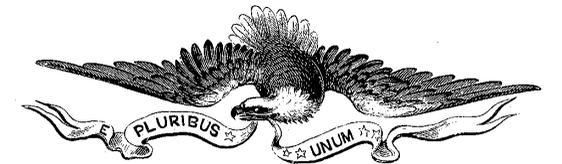
JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL SUMMER EVENT!!!

During recent years, the membership has given rave reviews to our summer celebration of antiques at the Brentwood Library on Concord Road. We will follow in this format on Saturday, August 28th at the same location from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

As in the past, attendees are invited to bring along one of their antiques for a free appraisal courtesy of the Brentwood Historical Society. This year's appraiser will be established professional, Mary Rose McCabe. Suzanne Burns is still working to finalize the balance of the program which she hints may be of a patriotic theme.

Members seeking an appraisal should

arrive at the library early with their antique, preferably by 1 PM so that appropriate setup can be accomplished. The event will be open to the membership at no charge, and your friends and relatives are also invited to attend so as to learn more about the Brentwood Historical Society. We hope you will be able to join us.



HOUSE OF MYSTERIES AT MOUND NO. 2 (CONTINUED)

placed within the room. Myer's group determined that a wooden object had occupied the space, and that, "The size and shape faintly suggest an image or idol with a rectangular base..."

After an unknown period of time, all existing structures were removed, and Mound No. 2 was raised another three feet. On this new elevation, the prehistoric residents established a large fire pit of special importance to the group as it was maintained for a long period of time, and no pottery fragments or animal bones were found in it.

After long use of the fire pit, an important town house or "House of Mysteries" was erected on the spot. The builders "laid a floor of black, glossy earth, erected a building, and established an altar therein...The building appears to have had upright posts set about 18 inches apart...The walls were made of cane stems woven in and out between the upright posts. The wattling was plastered with earth and the wall was hung with a layer of cane matting. The doorway of the main room of the House of Mysteries faced the east and looked out over the town square. On the interior, at the doorway, is an interesting curved arrangement of three posts. A similar arrangement of

posts were found at the doorway of the Sacred Image House, on the first level. The use of the inner posts at the door is unknown." It was also explained in the report that one or two other buildings existed on the mound at this stage.

Myer states that the House of Mysteries probably held two rooms. The portion containing an altar was likely a western room being 56 feet by 22 feet. This location held an oval alter bowl, measuring 32 inches by 29 inches, and being four inches deep. "It was composed of hard-burned puddled red clay, and was filled with clean, white powdery ashes, which contained no charcoal or fragments of pottery or bones. The sacred fire had been allowed to burn out without being smothered. The smooth, black glossy floor did not continue underneath the altar."

These early inhabitants of Brentwood showed continuous evidence of their spiritual lives throughout the course of settlement at the Fewkes Group site. It is clear that Mound No. 2 was a central focus of the religious life of the community. More detailed information on this subject is outlined in the 41st Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology which contains Myer's report on the Fewkes Group.

GRANNY WHITE PIKE, A TURNPIKE ROAD

BY T. VANCE LITTLE

When going to Nashville, I almost always take Granny White Pike. There is something about the sometimes rough and narrow way that appeals to me. At the narrowest and roughest point I remember Granny White's cabin that stood on a hillside so steep that they said she had to prop her pumpkins up to keep them from rolling down the hill.



In her rustic log inn she entertained such dignitaries as Andrew Jackson and Thomas Hart Benton. The latter made her a national celebrity by mentioning her in a speech before Congress as the quintessential example of American courage, frugality, and industry.

As I take care not to slide off the side of the road into the washed out ruts, I remember that the pike was once a gravel road. It probably did not even follow the same route

then that it does today. In the old days, roads followed the paths of least resistance, hugging contours and low grades. They changed their courses according to the season and climate.

Today Granny White Pike is a black-top road for which we owe a debt of gratitude to Scottish engineer John Louden McAdam. He discovered a technique of road building that is still being used today. Such roads are called McAdamized roads.

The technique discovered by McAdam was based on the idea that chipped gravel would contract and bond together through usage by travelers and their vehicles. The Romans used the idea of piling rock on top of each other beginning with the larger ones on the bottom and working up to a layer of fine stone. But the Romans and road builders until the time of McAdam used river gravel with smooth edges. They failed to pick up on the idea that chipped gravel would compact.

Middle Tennessee was a Mecca for McAdamized roads. Limestone is one natural resource in Middle Tennessee for which there is an unlimited supply. Quar-

"In her rustic log inn she entertained such dignitaries as Andrew Jackson and Thomas Hart Benton..."

GRANNY WHITE PIKE.... (CONTINUED)

ries can still be seen along roadsides where convicts and Irish laborers chipped limestone day after day and hauled it away on mule drawn land slides.

McAdamized roads provided a permanent surface for all-weather travel. But it took money, manpower, and equipment to build a McAdamized road. The private sector came forth and organized companies to build roads. Turnpike companies they were called. They depended on local sources of capital and became one of the major investment tools of the mid-19th Century.

On January 25th, 1850, the Tennessee Legislature created a turnpike company to build a new Granny White Pike. The company was called The Nashville and Middle Franklin Turnpike Company. The commissioners were directed to open books and sell capital stock not to exceed \$50,000. Those commissioners were John Nichol, Henry Compton, Dr. William Lawrence, Thomas McCrory, James Walker, Frederick Bradford, and William Sawyers. Commissioners appointed to locate and fix the route of the road were John Kirkman, James Overton, Thomas Gowdy, John Seigler, Thomas N. Cotton, William D. Gale, and Matthew Johnson.

The road was to begin at Broad Street in

Nashville and run along the western wall of the Lunatic Asylum (that's right Lunatic Asylum) with the old Middle Franklin Road and to continue to run along with the old road, passing White's Gap (and we know who lived there).

Tennessee law specified the duties of turnpike companies. Following the dictates of McAdam, the gravel was not to exceed one-half pound in weight. It was not to be piled in the middle of the road and had to cover the space from one ditch to the other. Turnpike commissioners were also charged with the responsibility of keeping the roads free of impediments and debris, being free for the passage of any carriage, wagon, or other vehicle.

Both Franklin Road and Wilson Pike were also built by turnpike companies. Franklin Pike was built in the 1830's and Wilson Pike in the 1840's. The railroad was built through the intersection of these two roads, which is where the "Village of Brentwood" was originally laid out. It was a town center, which is about to be reborn.

Scottish Engineer John Loudin McAdam would be proud of his legacy in Middle Tennessee and to the world. For his contributions he was offered a knighthood, which he declined.

T. Vance Little

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERIES AT MOUND NO. 2, FEWKES GROUP

BY JOE LASSUS

William Myer documents two structures "of great sanctity" discovered during his excavation of the Fewkes Group site during the 1920's. Myer's group specifically studied Mound No. 2 which lies immediately northwest of the larger and still visually prominent Mound No. 1. In the period photograph below, Mound No. 2 is the lowest of the two mounds pictured behind the farm fence. Boiling Spring Academy is on the far left in the photograph.

These early archeologists determined that Mound No. 2 was raised in three different stages over hundreds of years. The first level of the mound was determined to be three feet at its highest point. On the southwestern portion of the mound at this stage a "sacred image house" was con-

structed. The report states, "This was a very small building, and apparently of great sanctity. Here were found traces of what was probably an ancient sacred image or idol, the remains of their sacred maize and maize meal, a peculiar arrangement of rectangular piles of stones probably belonging to a shrine, and traces of some of their ancient fire ceremonies...On the interior of this Sacred Image House, at the doorway, was a peculiar arrangement of two posts. A somewhat similar arrangement appeared in a later building, the House of Mysteries." Another curious aspect of the Sacred Image House was a rectangular cavity in the north wall approximately 10 inches by 14 inches and 3 inches deep. The report notes it as an obvious object of importance prominently (continued on page 6)

