

Days Of Old Sumner County

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Sumner County Historical Society

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Movies, Popcorn And Starlit Nights At the Sumner Drive-In Theater

By Bonnie Martin, Sumner Archives

Saturday night fun started early for a good front row parking spot. Families arrived early to set up lawn chairs and settle in for a night of movies. Pickup trucks had the best view and kids, chairs and blankets piled in the back.

Romantics settled for the back rows, and double dates choose the middle section. No one actually expected to watch a first run movie. It was really all about sitting outside in the evening and trips to the concession stand for bags of popcorn and candy.

Sumner Drive-In was a casual place; adults had no need to dress up, and pajama clad children fell asleep on a blanket in the back seat. No one cared if small children cried. Turning up the speaker was the remedy.



Sumner Drive-In opened in 1950 with a capacity for 300 cars on eight acres. In 1956, Margaret and Harold Smith bought the drive-in, and Margaret continued to run it until the last showing September 30, 1998.

Originally, admission was 50-cents. Later, prices were a dollar, and for that a family watched several movies, cartoons and short films. Sound quality was questionable from speakers hooked to the car windows. Part of the experience was finding a parking spot that had an intact

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This painting, "The Station Camp, Dogs and Deerskins," is what Gallatin artist David Wright envisioned as a long hunter camp.

Young Mansker Heads West to Tennessee

By Jan Shuxteau

Armed with a rifle named Nancy, Kasper Mansker was among the earliest pioneers to venture into what was then America's Wild West, the hostile Indian territory that is now Tennessee. At 19-years-old, Kasper was, by the summer of 1769, an experienced woodsman, one of the capable breed called long hunters because of the "long hunts" they made into the wilderness. Goodlettsville's historic Mansker Station is his fort.

Writing about Mansker in the summer 1971 *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, State Historian Walter Durham said, "Few of his contemporaries would lead a life more fraught with adventure and danger than he. And few of those who came to the Cumberland frontier in 1769 survived the hardships to see, as he did, the wilderness conquered and new routes opened westward into the rich lands of the Louisiana Purchase."

This is part one of the story of Kasper Mansker—his early adventures as a long hunter—described by Durham, citing Judge John Haywood, whose 1823 book, *The Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee*, was the first history of Tennessee. Unlike most long hunters, Mansker actually wrote or dictated, possibly to Haywood, an account of his travels.

Kasper Mansker's First Journey as a Long Hunter

Haywood wrote that in the second week of June 1769, Kasper Mansker and 20 or more men assembled pack horses on Reedy Creek and followed the Holston River down to Abingdon, Va. They crossed into Kentucky, passing in

(See **MANSKER**, Page 10)

Sumner County Reaches a Peak: 1839-1875

By Ken Thomson, President SCHS

The settlement of Sumner County began circa 1780, and by 1839 the founding families were second and third generation. This was a time of prosperity. Sumner citizens reaped the harvest of their pioneering ancestors. In the last years before the Civil War, this county reached its zenith in the pre-war society.

In the ante-bellum period, Sumner was one of the wealthiest counties in the state. Its families constructed substantial homes and provided educational opportunities on the highest levels for their children. Girls were educated locally at Howard Female College or sent to the Nashville Female Academy or to eastern seminaries. Boys matriculated at one of several colleges in Nashville, Kentucky or North Carolina. A chosen few were sent to one of the great universities in the East or to Europe.

The children of Captain James Franklin Sr., a soldier of the Revolution, became the most affluent siblings in the county. They built the largest number of brick dwellings and sent their children to such institutions of higher learning as Transylvania University at Lexington, Ky., and Princeton University at Princeton, N.J.

The people of Sumner County were as diverse as its topography. Every station in life was represented, and each contributed to the county in its own way. With the advent of the steamboat and the railroad came a new mobility of travel that changed the complexion of the entire county. Professionals such as Dr. Cornelius W. Callender, a graduate of the Allegheny College of Pennsylvania, came here to begin his long tenure as an educator. He met and married the lovely Clara Reed Harper, the granddaughter of Rev. Hubbard Saunders of Saundersville. Soon after the Civil War, Dr. Callender established the first equivalent of a high school in Hendersonville (1871), and in 1873 he was elected Superintendent of Sumner County Schools.

The 1850 Census shows that Sumner County men pursued a variety of vocational pursuits during this period. Examples include: Henry F. Young - raftman; John S. Sanford - lawyer, Thomas Patton - carpenter, James Suddarth - millwright, Jacob Newton - stone mason, William M. Wilson - plasterer, William Crawford Knight - carriage maker, Zachariah W. Baker - tinner, John Bernard Jr. - harness maker, Francis Anthony Sporer - musician, Benjamin Tuttle - stage driver, Jesse F. Joyner - gold digger, Allen Pryor - mechanic, James W. Cole - cabinet maker.

Marriages, Divorces, Separations

A few marriages during this period ended because of mutual incompatibility. Others ended due to the ravages of disease, the most common being consumption. When Joseph Kleber Miller married Mary "Mollie" Franklin in 1842, he knew he had consumption. They soon became involved in a new medical experiment being held in Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. Cabins were constructed inside the cave for consumption patients and their spouses in hopes that the cool air would cure their

disease. The Millers lived in a cave cabin for several months until Joseph's death—hastened by the atmosphere of the cave. Needless to say, the experiment was a failure.

The marriage of Dr. Elmore H. Douglas to Mrs. Eliza H. Allen Houston in November 1840 was, as she wished, a quiet affair unlike her first wedding. In 1829 at age 19—amidst great fanfare—she had married Tennessee Governor Sam Houston, later president of the new Republic of Texas. As history revealed, it was definitely not a union made in heaven. Eliza left Houston only 11 weeks after their wedding. She returned to Gallatin, where citizens of the town actually burned Houston in effigy, according to a letter to Andrew Jackson from a man named Charles Love. Houston resigned as governor and fled to the Arkansas territory to Indian friends. Eliza never pursued a divorce, but Houston did, acquiring the decree in 1837 shortly after becoming Texas president. Like Eliza, he remarried in 1840. He had also entered into a Cherokee Indian marriage in 1830 but left this wife when he went to Texas in 1832.

By 1861 the clouds of war were looming over Sumner County, and many young couples were separated both temporarily and permanently. Elmore Harris Green was among the fortunate survivors who rode off to the war. Serving with Morgan's Raiders, he was imprisoned for a time but lived to return to his bride Ann Maria Miers.

One prospective bridegroom, John William Stuart, lost an arm in the Battle of Vicksburg. He was hospitalized in a home where he was nursed to health by a daughter of the house named Vena, who wanted to marry him. He told her he was spoken for back in Tennessee but that he would remember her by naming his first daughter after her. In 1867, he married Catie H. Parker, and the couple had a daughter whom they promptly named Vena Hamilton to keep his promise.

Rebuilding a New, Better Society

In the aftermath of the war, the old civilization gave way to a new enlightened society and a new era. One of the greatest contributors to transitioning Sumner County at this time was the Rev. Peter Vertrees (1840-1926). He was a young black Baptist minister who came to Gallatin from Edmonson County, Kentucky, after being mustered out of the Confederate Army. He had been reared by his white grandparents, who died during the war. He then lived with their son, Judge James Cunningham Vertrees. Judge Vertrees saw to it that Peter was educated, sending him to Roger Williams University. Vertrees returned to Sumner County and spent nearly 60 years preaching and teaching. He established numerous churches and schools in this area, leaving a legacy unequalled. He married Amanda Love Dowell in 1872, but six months later she died. By a later marriage, he had several children. Due to his efforts and those of his contemporaries, the county returned to normalcy by 1875.

1960: World Record Fish Caught on Old Hickory Lake

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

Sixty-three years ago this month—Aug. 2, 1960—a man named Mabry Harper went fishing on Old Hickory Lake and reeled in what was and still is the world record walleye.

Harper, a Hartsville plumber and avid fisherman, liked spending his spare time on the recently dammed Old Hickory Lake, going after great catches: bass, crappie, blue gill and catfish. On this particular day, Harper hoped to bring home a large catfish to fry up for supper. He knew about catching big fish—he'd once caught a 90-pound catfish—so he used an ultra heavy 75-pound test line, according to a story about Harper's world record walleye in the *Newton County Enterprise*.

Harper realized right away that something big had taken his bait on that sultry August day. He played the fish for more than an hour before finally bringing it in. It was not the tasty catfish he'd wanted, but a great, big walleye. This was a surprise, to say the least. Old Hickory Lake was not exactly known as the place to catch a big walleye, not in 1960 and not today. In any event, the fish was so big that Harper decided to take it home and show it off, maybe get a picture.



Mabry Harper and his walleye, 1960

According to family lore, Harper's wife persuaded him to take the fish to have it weighed and measured. So off they went to a local tackle shop, where the fish was weighed in at 25 pounds, four ounces and measured 41 inches long. A local game warden, James Spurling, witnessed this and later tested the scales and found them to be four ounces heavy. The fish was weighed again and was reported to be 25 pounds even. All of this was written up as testimony and—along with a picture of Harper holding his fish—sent to the National Freshwater Fishing Organization's Hall of Fame in Wisconsin. The fish, itself, was cleaned, chopped and eaten for supper—as planned.

Meanwhile, the Fishing Hall of Fame and the International Game Fish Association received the testimony, saw the picture and verified that Harper's

fish was not just the largest walleye caught in Tennessee but was, in fact, the largest caught worldwide. Mabry Harper was famous!

His record remained in place until the 1990s when controversy erupted. Biologist Dick Sternberg, renowned author of numerous fishing books and a founding member of the Fishing Hall of Fame, questioned the walleye's size in an article he wrote for *Outdoor Life*. This led to the record being disqualified.

Sternberg claimed that the walleye did not look big enough in the 1960 photo (at left) sent to the Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame. Sternberg compared the length of the fish to the average size of a man's hand, an analysis that convinced the Fishing Hall of Fame to remove Harper's walleye as the world record holder and replace it with a 22-pound, 11-ounce walleye caught in Arkansas's Greers Ferry Lake in 1982.

Harper was no longer alive to defend his record, but his family and friends were irate. Among other things, they pointed out that measuring the fish's length against Harper's hand was inexact and subjective since no one knew the size of his hand.

Harper's friend, John Oliver, president of Trousdale County Historical Society; Harper's son, Bobby, and step-son, Jerry, gathered evidence to support Harper's record. Oliver spent more than a year tracking down old photos, searching for documents and interviewing surviving witnesses, including retired game warden Spurling, who again confirmed the fish's size.

Oliver found photos of Harper's wife holding the fish and standing against the door of a 1959 Plymouth sedan, an item of specific dimensions. Oliver hugely enlarged the photo to life size, showing that the fish she held was exactly 41 inches long. There was also a photo of the walleye's head after it was cut off. Atop the fish's head was a ruler that showed its exact dimensions.

In 2010, Oliver traveled to the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame headquarters and argued for reinstatement of Harper's walleye as world record holder. He said that the evidence for the Old Hickory Lake walleye was indisputable.

The organization decided to revisit the issue and after conducting its own investigation voted in May 2010 to officially reinstate the Harper walleye as world champion.

In a press release about the reinstatement, the organization said, "Once we chose to more deeply investigate the Harper walleye, we came into contact with the Trousdale County Historical Society, which supplied us with an impressive amount of additional information supporting the fish. We had not been privy to this information previously. Once we delved through this new documentation, we realized it not only greatly supported the Harper walleye's validity, but it also disproved the [hand analysis] theory which led to the walleye's removal in 1996."

Sumner Has Its Own Confederate 'Ashley Wilkes'

By Ken Thomson, President SCHS

What comes to mind when you hear the name Ashley Wilkes? One of the greatest movies ever made. In 1939, "Gone With The Wind" was filmed based on an historical novel by Margaret Mitchell who recreated life as it had been in Georgia in the antebellum South. We will probably never know how she chose the name, Ashley Wilkes, as one of the main characters. Did she see that name in a list of Confederate soldiers? Nevertheless, by fate or whatever, Sumner County had its own Ashley Wilkes in the Confederate Army.

In 1825 in Castalian Springs, Ashley Stanfield Wilkes was born to Samuel Snead Wilkes and his wife, Mary Stanfield, the second of their 11 children. His siblings were: Mary Ann who married Charles H. Spears; Narcissa, first wife of James Mitchener; Cinderilla second wife of James Mitchener; Louisa who married Williamson H. Martin; Lucillius Ulysses; Josiah Valerius who married Elizabeth Fakes; Martha Jane who married Alexander Green Stone; Samuel Moody who married Mary E. Robertson; James and Richard.

The grandparents were Richard Stone Wilkes and wife, Mary Ann Snead, and Abraham Stanfield and wife, Mary Farley, who came to Sumner County from Virginia in the early 19th Century. They settled at Bledsoe's Lick, later called Castalian Springs.

Ashley grew to manhood in a middle-class farming family. He probably learned to read and write and probably attended a Latin grammar school for, maybe, six to eight years.

When he was 20 years old, he married Sarah E. Davis, the daughter of his neighbor, John Davis. (Back in those days, a young man usually married a girl who lived not more than an hour's ride from home.) Together they acquired a small farm where they began their family. From 1845 to 1861, they led a peaceful and normal life.

Then came war. The Civil War began in the spring of 1861. Many young men were hesitant to join the Confederacy because they had no slaves. Only seven percent of the population owned slaves. Ashley owned one slave—a little seven-year-old girl whom he and Sarah were rearing.

He did not join the Confederacy until invasion was at hand. He enlisted November 1, 1861, at Camp Jim Davis, named after his wife's brother, James M. Davis. Prior to the war, it was a health spring resort at the edge of Macon County called Epperson Springs. It was named after Ananias Epperson who first developed it. Epperson later sold the resort to his brother-in-law, James M. Davis. He converted it to the military camp during the war.

Here Ashley and his brother, Ulysses, joined Company C, 7th Cavalry Battalion, under Captain Edward P. Tyree of Castalian Springs, a son of Pleasant Tyree and Matilda Anderson. His uncle, Richmond C. Tyree, owned Tyree Springs. Edward's wife was Elizabeth

Patience Bate, the daughter of James Henry Bate and Amanda Patience Weathered.

Ashley brought with him a double-barrel shotgun furnished him by E. B. Martin and valued at \$25.

Ashley enlisted for 12 months, ending Oct. 19, 1862. But this was not to be; death removed him earlier. In May 1862, he died on his way home after the Battle of Shiloh. The record does not show, but he either died of wounds or disease. On the 11th U.S. Census of 1890, his widow reported that he served only seven months.

Ashley and Sarah had six children, the last born just before he joined the army. They were Margaret in 1846, James in 1850, Mary Jane in 1853, Sarah M. in 1859, Rosaline in 1860 and Mattie in 1861. Mattie, the only one to marry, was the wife of John Lee Hamilton.

John Lee Hamilton was a son of James Calvert Hamilton and his wife, Martha Patterson Swaney. His grandfather, John Lee Swaney, was a famous post rider between Natchez and Nashville, beginning in 1800. Befriending the bandits that roamed the trace enabled him to make successful rides for they desired the news of the area and newspaper accounts of their exploits.

Mattie and John Hamilton had one son, whom they named Ashley. He was born in 1883 and died young. He was the only grandchild of Ashley and Sarah Wilkes. Therefore, they have no descendants.

In 1899, Ashley's widow, Sarah, was bedridden and lived modestly on her little farm with her only surviving children, Rosaline and James, who were both in poor health. A young Smith County man, Phillip Emory Burris, Jr., worked for her. He knew where she kept her money, and one day he took her little savings--\$ 27.50. Sarah and her brother, Robert, who was sleeping in the house, both filed statements with the court. The money was returned. Sarah died the next year in 1900.

It appears that Phillip Burris continued his criminal activities. By 1910, he was a prisoner in Hopkinsville, Ky. Records show that he married Mallie Florence Pruett in 1904. She was the daughter of Silas Barnabas Pruett and his wife, Mary Angeline Ayers. Mallie Burris died in 1912, leaving one child, Edna Mai, born in 1905 and eventually married to John Paul Womack.

When Phillip registered for the World War I draft, he had been promoted to inmate at the Kentucky Penitentiary at Eddyville, Ky. By 1928, he had remarried Nellie Florence Loman of Cookeville and moved to Nashville where he became a successful merchant. The second half of his life was that of a model citizen. He died in 1954 and was buried in Spring Hill Cemetery in Davidson County.

(DRIVE-IN, Continued from Page 1)

speaker that worked. Sometimes several parking moves were required to get a good speaker. Occasionally, at the end of an evening cars filed out past parking spots with severed speakers lying on the ground.

The peak of the drive-in years ran from the 1950s to the 1970s. Sumner Drive-In lured in new generations with cash drawings, staying open year round and showing prime movies. Movies started at twilight, usually cartoons followed by movies such as "Tarzan and the Slave Girl", "Mighty Joe Young", "Broken Arrow", "The Outlaw". Elvis Presley movies were always a big crowd draw and money maker.

Summer Drive-In Theater
Call for Movie Info... (615) 452-3982
MOVIE RADIO SOUND !! 102.3 FM on your radio

Open Year Round - Fall and Winter Schedule: Fri., Sat., Sun.

MENU	
Hamburger	\$ 1.75
Cheeseburger	\$ 2.00
Chicken Sandwich	\$ 2.00
Chuckwagon Steak	\$ 2.00
Corn Dog	\$ 1.50
Hot Dog	\$ 1.50
Chili Dog	\$ 1.50
Grilled Cheese	\$ 1.50
Hot Wings	\$ 2.00
French Fries	\$.80
Tator Tots	\$.90
Onion Rings	\$.80
Pickle	\$.50
Nachos	\$ 1.50
WITH EXTRA CHEESE	\$ 2.00
Macho Nachos	\$ 2.50
Freeze Pop	\$.50
Klondike Ice Cream Bar	\$ 1.25
CHEESE \$.25 EXTRA	
POPCORN	
Box	\$ 1.25
Medium Butter Cup	\$ 1.50
Large Butter Bucket	\$ 2.50
DRINKS	
Small	\$ 1.25
Medium	\$ 1.50
Large	\$ 1.75
Coca Cola, Diet Coke, Sprite, Dr. Pepper, Mello Yello, Pink Lemonade	
Coffee	\$.50
Hot Chocolate	\$ 1.25
Ice - Medium	\$.50
Large	\$.80
All Candy	\$ 1.25
Gum	\$.50
Cigarettes	\$ 2.50
PIZZA	
Combo - Pepperoni & Sausage 12"	\$ 6.00
Pepperoni 12"	\$ 6.00

Gradually the drive-in crowd waned when television sets became common place in even the humblest home. Cable TV, VHS home movies and video stores signaled the end of drive-in theaters.

Now the Sumner Drive-In site is a commercial development. Sumner Drive-In Theater may have closed, but memories linger: the smell of popcorn, hum of families setting up their chairs, children's laughter, the huge white screen suddenly springing to life and the screech and roar of Hollywood music. The Sumner Drive-In sign was rescued and is on display at the Sumner County Museum.

Information gathered from news articles by Cheryl Tatum, Kitty Kulakowski and others.

Cemetery Tour Set For Oct. 7, Wins Award

The 27th annual Spirits of Sumner County Candlelight Cemetery Tour will be held October 7, the first Saturday of the month. in the historic Gallatin Cemetery, located on Cemetery Street, by Wendy's on West Main Street.

Walks will be from 4 to 10 p.m. Walks last about 60 minutes.

Sumner County Museum, which stages the event, recently received an award of excellence from the Tennessee Association of Museums in the special events category for the annual cemetery tour.

Visitors will see and hear stories from cemetery "residents" from the 1800s. This year's theme will be "Local Artists" and will include: Ralph E.W. Earl as greeter, Richard Walter Ramsey, Robert Benjamin Baker Jr., Alice Baker Guthrie, Katie Mai Love, Benetta Anderson Lackey, Nell Garner Price, Florida Franklin Anderson, Lua King Baskerville and Bettie Humphries Franklin.

For advance tickets, contact Sumner County Museum at sumnercountymuseum.org or visit the museum in Gallatin at 183 W. Main. The museum is open Tuesday-Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Cemetery tour tickets are \$12 or \$20 for adults, depending on the time of day. Children are free. All proceeds will go to support the museum.

A Little More about Maddox And Blythwood House

Al Dittes, who often writes for this newsletter, had a little more information to add to our June story about the restoration of Blythwood House, formerly owned by the late world famous pianist, Johnny Maddox.

Dittes said, "I think about Johnny every time I drive by Blythwood. I grew up living across the street from some close friends of his and enjoyed talking with him about that time at historical society meetings in later years.

"He told me that his musical career began in 1944 when, at the age of 16, he played for a Lions Club Minstrel Show in Gallatin. Mr. [Randy] Wood was part of the club and took note. He may not have actually recorded until 1950.

"Johnny also said on another occasion that Sam Houston and Andrew Jackson had been in that house, and he had just found out that Andrew Johnson once made a speech on its front porch."

DO YOU REMEMBER CRASH BROWN, THE HUMAN BOMB?

BY BONNIE MARTIN, SUMNER COUNTY ARCHIVES

THE
WORLD'S
MOST DARING
STUNT MAN!
IN HIS
DEATH
DEFYING
CASKET!

An amazing Sumner Countian—whose daring feats have been immortalized in photographs and are still remembered by old timers in these parts—was John Timothy Brown, aka “Crash Brown.”

Born in 1920 near Westmoreland, Tenn. and the son of a Methodist minister, Crash was one of the first legendary stunt men. At 6'9", he was the *Fast and Furious* star of the 1950s and '60s. Crash actually began his career at age 16, traveling and performing car stunts during the summer months, returning home to finish high school in the winter.



After fighting in WWII, Purple Heart veteran Crash came home to Sumner County—home to rural life where work was scarce and poverty abundant. Crash decided to go back to doing what he knew best: crashing cars. Crash Brown made the “circuit”, crashing cars, driving motorcycles through flaming walls, leaping buses, trucks and even a house. He was the first man to roll a car end over end without roll bar protection. Crash held the record for a car broad jump of 329 feet. As part of his thrill show, he jumped a motorcycle 200 feet, over a 150 foot cliff and into 50 feet of water.

Having a family to support didn't slow Crash down, he took them on the road with him and made his family part of his act. His wife and three children all performed stunts, touring across 37 states, Canada and Mexico. Crash performed at the Worlds Fair, at thousands of county fairs, drive in theaters and television's *You Asked For It*. In his lifetime, the state of Kentucky honored Crash Brown with the title of Honorary Colonel.

The Human Bomb stunt was the most dangerous stunt for an individual to attempt, and Crash was one of the few to survive it to perform another day. He performed the stunt atop a steel tower, sealed inside a large wooden box—“coffin”—surrounded by flaming blasting powder and five sticks of dynamite located near his head. Crash ignited the dynamite. The resulting explosion extinguished the flames, blew the coffin to kindling, and Crash emerged—more or less in one piece—waving to the crowd.

Crash never got rich, but he found a way to provide for his family and entertain thousands on hot summer nights of the 1950s and '60s. Crash ran the circuit from 1939 to 1969.

Finally, Crash returned home to Westmoreland to live out his days surrounded by reminders of his glory days, hundreds of his wrecked vehicles. Crash passed away Feb. 28, 1989, but his exploits live on in a collection of photos at the Sumner County Archives in Gallatin.





Parker's Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, built in 1956, is rooted to the 150-plus-year-old community it serves

Portland's Parker's Chapel Community Established Circa 1870

By Beverly L. Bragg

Historical buildings and sites are significant in that they serve as visual reminders of days gone by, while keeping us connected to the people who came before us. And when a historical building and/or site is still in use after many years in a community, relationships within that community are strengthened. Such is the case of the Parker's Chapel Community.

Located at 387 Airport Road in Portland, Tennessee, the Parker's Chapel Community, originally known as "Taylor's Old Field" or "Old Field" was established shortly after the Civil War by Sam and Lucinda Groves-Coakley, descendants of ex-slaves. They were eventually joined by the Lucy Perdue family from Virginia, as well as the Dye, Hobdy, and Gibbs families. These families built homes, planted gardens, and raised and sold strawberries and tobacco. Additionally, they had a school, a church, a cemetery, a blacksmith shop,

and a grocery store. As the community continued to grow, it became home to businessmen, beauticians, carpenters, ministers, and musicians.

Initially built circa 1870, the log church also served as the community's first school, and parents employed the teachers. In 1923, Parker's Chapel School was built with funding received from the Rosenwald Fund. In 1960, however, the school closed, and students were bused to Gallatin until 1965, when Portland schools desegregated.

Today, the property has two main buildings – Parker's Chapel Missionary Baptist Church (built in 1956 and operational) and a separate Fellowship Hall (built in 1970 and operational), as well as one contributing site – the Parker's Chapel Cemetery (operational since 1885).

Both the community and the church were named after its first pastor, Rev. James Parker.

The church is a one-story rectangular brick building with a gable-front, a Colonial Revival-style entrance and a metal gable roof with a small spire atop. In 1959, the building was used to host community gatherings related to desegregation and voting issues, as well as other events. Currently, the church is a place of worship on Sundays and Wednesday afternoons, as well as a venue for community gatherings and events, such as the annual church homecoming, established in July of 1884 to encourage “former residents who had moved away to larger towns and cities to return for a community picnic, games, and music.” It was most recently celebrated on July 9th of this year. The concrete block fellowship hall, also still in use, was built in 1970 and is located north of the church.

The church was initially established as a Missionary Baptist Church, a denomination cited as “common among formerly enslaved people who formed communities after the Civil War.” It was the “Baptist doctrine’s ‘message of eventual salvation [that] gave them hope past their current life of enslavement’ as well as the harsh periods of violence and discrimination that followed emancipation.”

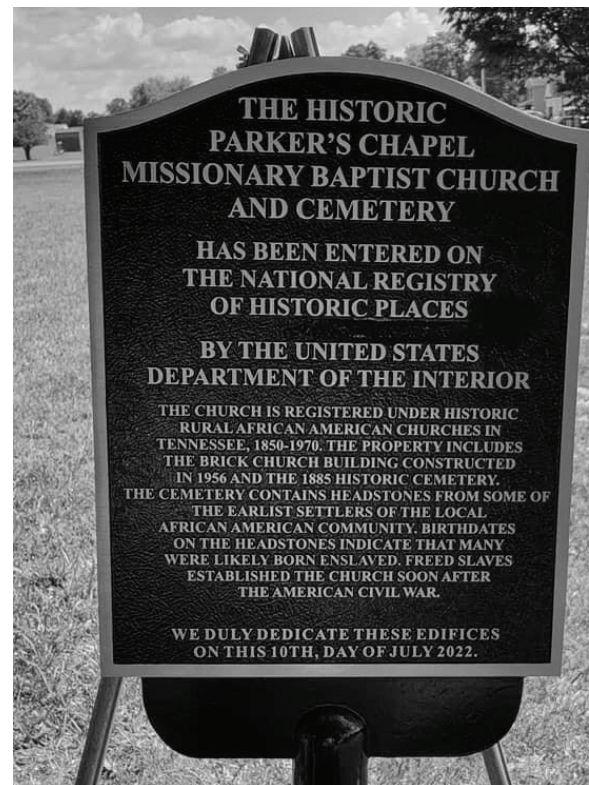
The historic cemetery is located directly south of the church and contains headstones from some of the earliest settlers of the Parker’s Chapel community, including graves from the Coakley, Dye, Gibbs, Perdue, Smith, and Johns families. Several of the stones have dates of birth ranging from the early to mid-nineteenth century. The earliest dated marker belongs to Abraham Perdue. The stone reads: “son of Lucy Perdue, died 11 Aug 1885, age 25 years 10 mos 3 days.” The nearly one hundred markers dating from the early to mid-twentieth centuries are in rows, while another section of the cemetery located along the eastern border of the property holds graves dating from around 1977 to 2021.

The cemetery is also home to various styles of grave markers, such as upright, flat, handmade, and manufactured. Several of the historic stones, for instance those for the Buntin family, appear hand stamped. In contrast, approximately 28 markers are carved in block-style letters and numbers with individual shapes located within the inscription of the markers, a style that has been credited to the craftsmanship of Joe Cornelius Coakley. The date range on these markers starts in the 1920’s and moves forward to 1962. This same style of lettering was also used on the church building’s dedication stone, which contains a star similar to the individual stars identified on several of the grave markers Coakley made.

Other markers boast more elaborate techniques, such as the slender, upright marker for Sam Groves with images of leaves and flowers. Still, markers in the non-historic section of the cemetery along the property’s eastern border can best be described as modern and sit upright on a base, beveled, or flat. Additionally, there are several fieldstones that are set upright in the ground, as well as assorted unmarked grave depressions. The dates of these unmarked sites are currently unknown. Also, half a dozen mature trees and smaller shrubs and bushes are scattered throughout the cemetery. Although the purpose of this vegetation is unknown, some say the plantings are in keeping with African American funerary traditions of marking graves.

In February of 2021, Parker’s Chapel Missionary Baptist Church and Cemetery requested to be added to the National Register of Historic Places, and on July 10, 2022, a dedication ceremony was held celebrating the completion of this request.

Author’s Note: All quotes in the article are from: [TN Sumner County Parker’s Chapel Missionary Baptist Church and Cemetery Watermarked Final.pdf](#)



(MANSKER, From Page 1)

what Mansker described as "a remarkable fish dam, which had been made in very ancient times." They continued into the barrens of Kentucky and made their first base camp at a place called Price's Meadow, where they hunted for eight or nine months.

In 1770 about half the hunters returned home, but Mansker and a few others stayed. They kept one boat, built two more and hacked out two trapping canoes. They loaded them all with furs and bear meat and pushed off down the Cumberland to Natchez where they planned to sell their cargo, according to Haywood.

When the fur-laden boats reached the future site of Nashville, the hunters saw at French Lick [near the present Bicentennial Mall] the largest number of buffalo and wild game they had ever seen in one place. They stopped and hunted, using the animal hides to cover their open boats. Then they continued downstream, reaching the mouth of the Cumberland. With their meat beginning to spoil, they decided to convert it into oil to sell. While camped, they were robbed by an Indian chief named John Brown and 25 braves who took two guns, ammunition, salt, and tobacco, according to Haywood.

Mansker and the men entered the Ohio River, following it to the Mississippi. They floated down the big river to Fort Natchez and farther downstream to Spanish Natchez, where they sold the furs and oil. Before all their cargo was sold, one boat broke loose from its moorings and floated down the Mississippi. Mansker and another hunter, John Baker, pursued it, finally overtook it and returned to Natchez.

After Natchez, Mansker's party split up. Some returned home, but others, including Mansker—who was ill—stayed behind. After his recovery, Kasper and John Baker set out by boat upriver. Along the way, they met and joined a party going by land to Georgia with a herd of horses. From Georgia, the two turned north, traveling through the valleys of East Tennessee, according to Haywood. They reached home after 18 months away.

He Couldn't Get Enough of the Hunt

In the fall of 1771, less than a year after his return from Natchez, Mansker set out again for the western wilderness, accompanied by Isaac Bledsoe, Joseph Drake, John Montgomery and others. The group camped on Russell's Creek in what is now Kentucky, built a house, and hunted there until February 1772. Then, with their ammunition running low, Mansker and some of the men went home to replenish supplies. Isaac Bledsoe and four others stayed at Russell's Creek to protect the house.

Back in Holston, Mansker and the rest of the hunters waited, anxious to get back to Russell's Creek but afraid to travel in severe winter weather. Surprising them all, Isaac Bledsoe arrived, bringing David Linch, who was very ill. According to Haywood, the hunters waited two months before heading back to camp. On the way, they met one of the three men left at Russell's Creek. He said that he'd escaped an Indian attack on the camp but that the other two men had been captured

and taken away. When Mansker and the other hunters reached Russell's Creek, they found no trace of the missing men. The camp itself was undisturbed, and the furs they'd left behind were still there.

The men pushed farther west, arriving in the middle Cumberland country, probably in late May, 1772, according to Guy Cisco's 1909 book, *Historic Sumner County Tennessee*. A station camp was established on a northern tributary of the Cumberland River at a point near Pilot Knob hill in Sumner County, now known as Station Camp Creek. They found game around the camp and stockpiled fur, but after a short time Indians discovered their cache, broke in and made off with more than 500 deerskins.

This 1772 long hunt was particularly important because of discoveries of salt licks, where game was heaviest. Mansker, himself, found two salt licks a short distance apart adjacent to a creek that emptied into the Cumberland River. A spring on the bank of the creek was where Mansker's fort was erected in 1780.

The men started their long trip to Holston in August of '72, but they ran across another group of hunters in Kentucky. Mansker and a few others decided to join this fresh party. They returned to the mid Cumberland to hunt and explore until the weather cooled.

Haywood noted that Mansker had a chance meeting in Kentucky with Daniel Boone. Mansker thought he was hunting alone near the Big Barren River when he heard singing. Advancing cautiously, he found "a man bare-headed, stretched flat upon his back on a deerskin, singing at the top of his voice." The singer was Boone.

Mansker Born on a Ship Headed to America

Kasper Mansker was born in 1750 to German immigrant parents, Ludwig Maintzger and Maria Eschk, who were aboard a ship called *Christian*, bound for America. Durham theorized that the family settled in the mid-Atlantic region though there is no formal record. Kasper had brothers, John, George Sr., and Ludwig and one sister, Catherine.

He married Elizabeth White, who was from the area that is now Berkeley County, West Virginia. We don't know when or where their wedding took place. Durham wrote that years after Kasper Mansker's death a Mansker slave named Jenny said that Elizabeth's parents so opposed her proposed marriage that she and Kasper eloped and settled at the head of the Holston River. Jenny said that it was from this place that Mansker began his long hunts into the western country.

George Mansker joined Kasper in Tennessee sometime prior to 1783. Both men received land grants of 640 acres from North Carolina dated April 17, 1786. Kasper's land lay on both sides of Mansker's Creek. George's land was located on Station Camp. Apparently, Kasper and Elizabeth had no children. Kasper willed his property to Elizabeth and George's children and grandchildren.

Judge John Haywood: Father of Tennessee History

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

At 350 pounds, Tennessee Supreme Court Presiding Judge John Haywood (pictured below), certainly cut a well-known figure among the early settlers of Middle Tennessee. His ability as a jurist was formidable, but it is his work as a historian for which he is now remembered. Dubbed the Father of Tennessee History, Haywood wrote *The Civil and Political History of Tennessee* published in 1823 (among other books), which traces Tennessee from prehistory to statehood in 1796. He is responsible for much of what we know about long hunter settler Kasper Mansker (page 1 of this publication) and other Tennessee pioneers.



Haywood was born in North Carolina in 1762 and died in December of 1823, according to his gravestone, which was originally located on Nashville's Nolensville Pike. Haywood was the son of Sarah and Revolutionary Major Egbert "Bird" Haywood of Halifax County, N.C. He received little formal education—one source says he briefly attended an academy outside of Halifax—but he handily taught himself. He read prodigiously and was already an assistant clerk to the North Carolina senate at age 16. Later, he was senate clerk, then House clerk. He was admitted to the bar in the 1780s, gained a brilliant reputation and was appointed as North Carolina Attorney General from 1791 to 1794. This led to a further appointment to the Superior Court of North Carolina.

He resigned from the court in 1800 to defend the North Carolina Secretary of State James Glasgow on charges of land fraud. Glasgow was convicted, and Haywood, himself, lost popularity by defending him. He and his wife Martha and some or all of their 10 children left town, moving to Raleigh. There, Haywood returned to private practice and began his work as a writer of

important legal books, including the state's first compilation of state statutes. He later wrote similar texts for Tennessee.

After Raleigh, Haywood and his family moved to Middle Tennessee, where he already owned land and had a good and influential friend, Tennessee Judge John Overton. Haywood built a house called Tusculum eight miles outside of Nashville and soon added two log cabins, which he used as a law office and venue to train young lawyers.

Haywood quickly established himself in his new locale, and in 1816 was appointed to the Tennessee Supreme Court, a position he held for the rest of his life. He continued his writing, turning to Tennessee for inspiration and adding religion and history to his repertoire. He examined early Tennessee records, interviewed pioneers and their descendants and wrote down their words. His work, though not always as accurate as today's standards demand, was groundbreaking in preserving and understanding the early days of this state. It also led to the start of the Tennessee Antiquarian Society in 1820, the first state historical society.

Haywood's *The Civil and Political History of Tennessee* was published just three years before his death and included the following excerpt, which might be seen as an indication of his scholarship. He wrote: "Thus East Tennessee began to be permanently settled in the winter of 1768-9. Ten families of these settlers came from the neighborhood of the place where Raleigh now stands, in North Carolina, and settled in Watauga. This was the first settlement in East Tennessee. Soon afterwards it was augmented by settlers from the hollows in North Carolina, and from Virginia. About the years 1768, 1769, 1770, such was the reigning fashion of the times as eminently promoted the emigration of its people from North Carolina. The trade of the country was in the hands of Scotch merchants, who came in shoals to get rich, and to get consequence. The people of the country were clothed in goods they imported, and to be dressed otherwise was scouted as a sign of barbarity and poverty."

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