

# A Step Back in Time By Bobbie Sue Shelton-Lonas Harpeth Lick Cumberland Presbyterian Church

(The following article was contributed by Mrs. Betty Lou Wilson of Allisona)

"In 1824, the Elk Presbytery held their spring meeting at the Harpeth Lick Meeting House." This is the earliest recorded date of a Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Williamson County, that has been discovered thus far".

In 1841, Zacheus Wilson, a Revolutionary War soldier, gave 2 ½ acres for a Cumberland Presbyterian Church, which was given the name, Harpeth Lick. On May 15 of that year, he signed his name to a deed stating 'for and in consideration of the natural love and affection which he said that Zacheus Wilson hath and beareth unto the people of God – doth given, grant, and confirm unto the said Thomas White, William Hatcher, and John L. Wilson, commissioners and their successors, a certain parcel of land, for the use and benefit of a sect called the Cumberland Presbyterians for a church. Zacheus Wilson was between 70 and 80 year old at this time.

This property, given for a church, was acreage from the track of land where Zacheus Wilson lived. The first church was built on Owen Hill Road, in the first curve west of the railroad. Little is known of the early history of the church except that the log church building was used for a school as well as for a church and that it was burned during an outbreak of smallpox in the community. After the disease abated the church was burned for fear of contamination.

Samuel Wilson was the first member of the Cumberland Presbyterian at Harpeth Lick. Simon Elliott Wilson, son of Zacheus' Wilson was one of the pastors of the early church. In 1903 Lemuel R. Wilson, grandson of Zacheus was pastor. Some of the old families that attended the church were Watson, Brown, Wilson, Connell, Bizzell, White, Graham, Farrah, Rickman and Andrews. The Church is a viable link between the past and the present.

The present Harpeth Lick Cumberland Presbyterian Church is located approximately ¾ of a mile due south of the original site. This area is called the Cove Community, which is in the twenty-first Civil District of Williamson County

The building date of the present church is not known. The logs to build the present church came off George Madison White's farm. It was constructed, when square head nails, were in use. One of the outstanding charms of the church is the original pews with wooden partitions. In the old days men sat on the right side, and the women and children on the left. Should a visitor sit on the wrong side, the preacher or an elder did not hesitate to ask them to move.

The present elders of the church are: Bobby Crafton, Barry Cooper, Mary Ann White Newcomb and Patricia Ann Wilson Peach\*

\*Patricia Peach is a descendant of the early settlers, the Wilsons, of Harpeth Lick.

The Harpeth Lick Cumberland Presbyterian Church will be open for the College Grove Tour of Homes. Franklin D. Wilson will be on site with more history of the Church and the surrounding area.

## THE COVE

The Cove Community is located in the southeastern section of Williamson County, two miles west of Allisona. The area covers several miles on both sides of the old Bethesda-Cross-Keys road, now called the Arno-Allisona Road.

This area is one of spectacular beauty, its hills and hollows folding away into the distance. The high ridges in the area, form watersheds for the Duck River on one side, and the Harpeth on the other.

In early pioneer days there was an abundance of deer, bear, turkey, buffalo and a lot of small game that was used for the survival of the settlers. There were also wolves and panthers that roamed this area.

The settlers of the cove were proud and very independent on their small but fertile farms. Early settlers of the cove were the sons of Robert and Eleanor Wilson and their families. Other later families were

the Watsons, Ladd, Connell, Bizzell, Simmons, White, Rickman, Brown, Graham, Andrews, Farrah, Criswell, Crafton and Biggers.

The Cove is supported by three churches; the historic Harpeth Lick Cumberland Presbyterian, The Beech Grove United Methodist and the Allisona Church of Christ. The name "Harpeth Lick" comes from days of long ago, when wild animals came to the salt licks in meadows behind the Church, to get salt and water from the springs.

When the Civil War began, many of the settlers would not tolerate slavery. This caused the section to be divided into hostile camps, some siding with the North and some with the South. There were three Biggers Brothers that fought in the Civil War. Will and one of his brothers fought on different sides. Will

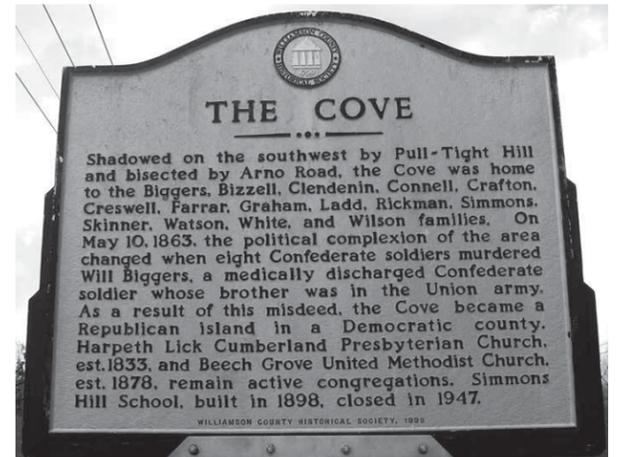
fought for the South, while his brother fought for the North. Before the war ended, Will was sent home with a heart ailment. After returning home, Will rode his horse to Franklin, to visit his brother who was headquartered, with his northern comrades. After returning home, several southern soldiers came to his home, carried Will on Pulltight Hill, shot and killed him. This killing caused the Cove to become the Republican strong hold of Williamson County.

Many stories of brother against brother have come out of the Civil War. None is more poignant than that of Will Biggers of the Cove Community. His murder was brutal and it is said that his spirit refused to leave the area, and his ghost still haunts Pulltight Hill.

There were three general stores in the Cove, Sam Watson's, Fount Ladd's, later owned by Sam White and the Craftons. There was a sawmill, cotton gin, tobacco manufacturing company operated by Andrews and White, later by Andrews and Ladd. There was a black smith shop and tannery on Matthew Wilson's farm. Various leather items such a harnesses for horses, boots and many other things.



Harpeth Lick Cumberland Presbyterian Church



Historical Marker Located In The Cove

Another interesting citizen of the community was Will Graham who was known as a faith healer. He could heal your horse if it had the Colic and could also blow out fire. If you got burned he could blow on the burned place and you would feel much better.

Mr. Rickman was a justice of the peace. He married several of the older couples from the Cove.

The Simmons Hill School, one of Williamson County one-room schools, was built in 1898. Mr. and Mrs. John Simmons gave the land for the school. Mr. Simmons, for whom the school was named, expressed a concern for the walking students so far to school. His donated land was a central location, and would easily cut off a mile or two for the walkers, the only means of getting to school in those days.

The one-room school consisted of grades one through eight with only one teacher. A wood-burning stove heated the building and water was drawn from a well nearby, to meet the needs of the teacher and students.

The board of Education closed the tiny school in the school year of 1946-47. The land and building was sold to a neighbor, Paul White. The existing students were transported to a school at College Grove.

There are several cemeteries in the Cove. They are Biggers, Beech Grove (Black), Matthew Wilson, George Madison White, Billy White, Will White, Brown, Pitt and Ladd.

In early days there were the Cherokee Indians to the east, but the Choctaw and Chickasaw were near-by. Many Indian artifacts have been found over the cove. There is said to be an Indian burial ground on the Bizzell farm in the Cove.



SIMMONS HILL SCHOOL - Top Row (L-R): Charlie Hartley, Robert Lee (Bob) White, Ada B. Tomlin, Sadie Obera White, Add Bigger, George Christman Graham, Lizzie Hartley, Carrie Hartley, Nannie Jane Bigger, \_\_\_\_\_, Turley Graham? Middle Row: Tommy Simmons, Callie Jane Skinner, Robert Carl Graham, Maggie Florence White, Jack Simmons, Emory Stores (Black) Creswell, Rosie Hartley, Fannie White?, \_\_\_\_\_, Fannie Fern Creswell. Bottom Row: Leonard Strickland White, Wiley B. White, Leslie Morris Creswell, Elizabeth Creswell, Lilly Maud White, Ernest C. Bizzell, Ruby Dink Tomlin, Ella Lee White, Mary Rodgers (Teacher), Dora Bigger, Daisey Bigger.



PICTURED AT RIGHT - SIMMONS HILL SCHOOL 1916 - Bottom Row (L-R): Agnes Crafton, Nellie Blythe Andrews, Fannie Andrews, Johnnie D. Andrews, Martha Jane Biggers, Agnes Watson, Willie Blythe Connell, Lucy America Biggers, Minnie Lou Skinner, Albert Owen Skinner, Lee White, Nannie T. Graham, Marvin Hartley. Middle Row: Inez Hinson (Teacher), Lucy Simmons, Maple Bizzell, Mary Smithson, Nellie Jane White, Fairy White, Mary Ella Crafton, Naola Skinner. Back Row: Thomas McMurrey, Warren Crafton, W. Blythe Bizzell, Robert Alexander Biggers Jr., Audie Simmons, Claude Hartley, Wallace Edgar Crafton, Stella White