## Primm Park



## Place of Mystery and History

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Middle Tennessee State University
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City of Brentwood, Tennessee

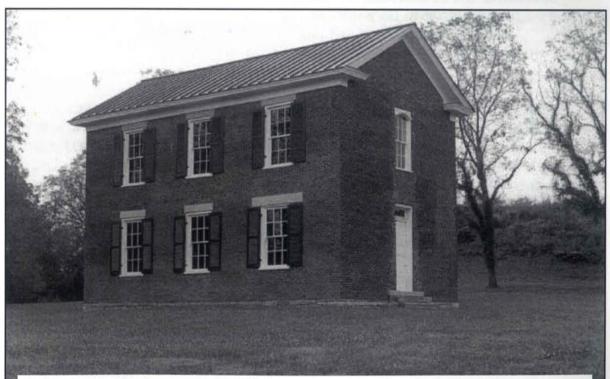
Sarah Jackson Martin, Principal Author Caneta Skelley Hankins, Project Director

December 2004

## School, Church, Barn, School: A Cycle Completed

Primm Park is also home to Boiling Springs Academy, a notable nineteenth-century brick building erected in 1832. Brentwood historian T. Vance Little compiled a brief history of Boiling Springs Academy beginning with newspaper announcements from 1831 to 1834. The earliest known reference to the academy appeared in the June 17, 1831 edition of the Western Weekly Review in which a notice requested the attendance of "the subscribers to the Boiling Springs Academy and Meeting House" to an upcoming meeting. The Boiling Springs Academy state charter of 1832 lists William Hadley, Ferdinand Stith, James H. Wilson, Joseph Crockett, and Andrew Crockett as trustees.

Later announcements in the Western Weekly Review (December 24, 1832 and January 23, 1833) advertised the opening of the academy: "The Boiling Springs Academy will be for the ensuing school year under the care of J. McCown Tilford, a young man of some experience in the business of teaching and a graduate of Cumberland College." The advertisements suggested classes would last roughly five months with three levels of instruction. For eight dollars in tuition, first level instruction included orthography, reading, writing, and arithmetic. Second level instruction included grammar and geography for a ten dollar fee, while the third level featured Latin, Greek, and science for twelve dollars.



Boiling Springs Academy opened in 1832 as a private school for white males. This photograph, taken in 2004, shows the north façade with Mound number one in background.

A fourth Western Weekly Review announcement in the October 17, 1834 edition advertised the need for a teacher at the academy: "A Teacher Wanted – to take charge of the Boiling Springs Academy. Good testimonials required. Application can be made to Joseph Crockett, Esq., or Major Wm. Hadley. By order of the Trustees."

Few early references to the Boiling Springs Academy have been uncovered, leaving many unanswered questions about the school's formative years. Moreover, an examination of the property deed fails to shed light on these important early years. The May 1851 deed transfers the land on which stands the Boiling Springs Academy from the heirs of Jabez Owen to the trustees of the "Williamson Boiling Springs Academy" for one dollar. The deed does not state why the Owen heirs are making this gift, however, the presumption is that Owen allowed the Academy to be built on his land, but never officially transferred the deed.

Speculation abounds when attempting to unravel the early history of Boiling Springs Academy. Although schools commonly advertised through catalogues, which listed the faculty, courses offered, student rosters, and information about the facility and fees, no such reference to Boiling Springs Academy has been found. Adding to the school's intrigue is the 1831 newspaper reference to the building as the "Academy and Meeting House," which suggests the facility served multiple functions. Efforts to link this school with a religious affiliation have also proven difficult, although evidence suggests Presbyterian involvement. For instance, Goodspeed's history of Williamson County (1886) notes, "In addition to the church at Franklin, the Presbyterians have an old established organization at Little Harpeth..." Historical assumptions aside, the construction of this impressive early nineteenth-century brick structure demonstrates the community's early commitment to education.

Families in the neighborhoods surrounding the academy housed students who required board. While the identities of most early Boiling Springs Academy students also remain elusive, one student became a pioneering citizen of Fresno County, California. According to a history of Fresno County, Judge S. H. Hill was born in Williamson County, Tennessee, in 1822. Hill, whose father served as Williamson County Sheriff for many years leading up to the Civil War, "finished his studies at Boiling Springs Academy in 1840." After working as a clerk in Nashville, Hill spent much of the 1840s traveling as a soldier in both the Second Tennessee Regiment and the Second Regiment of the Illinois Volunteers during the Mexican War. He taught nine years in the Ray County, Missouri, public schools before moving west to California, where he organized the first public school in Fresno County and served as Superintendent. Hill served as Justice of the Peace from 1875 to 1889 and is considered a prominent figure among the pioneers of Fresno County.<sup>13</sup>

Little is known about the school's history during the mid-nineteenth century. Boiling Springs Academy was a part of the Williamson County school system by January 1887 when Lillie Frost received payment of 25 dollars for teaching at "school #1 at Boiling Springs." The records also contain receipts for wood, coal, and maintenance at the school. Additional financial receipts show that the public school continued in operation through 1918 when Willie Nelle McArthur received \$26.25 for "teaching at Boiling Springs school." <sup>14</sup>

The building has maintained its original form despite some alterations. The rectangular structure is built on coursed, dressed limestone block with bearing walls made from hand-made brick laid in common bond on all four elevations. Color variations in the brick indicate that several different firings were used in the construction.

The present entrance is located in the west gable end. This elevation is a plain undecorated surface broken only by a central door with transom. A major structural defect has been patched with new brick and mortar. The north and south elevations are divided into five bays. Limestone lintels adorn windows on both elevations, with those on the south featuring decorative work and those on the



north remaining plain. The lintels located at the first story center window on the south elevation and the first story right window on the north elevation are longer than the others. This suggests, when coupled with the fact that the present entrance on the west elevation features no lintel, that the south elevation was the original entrance. Similarly, the present northeast corner window was also a rear door with a longer undecorated lintel.

Some research indicates the building was converted to a church around 1900, but evidence based on the recent restoration and archaeological examination indicates earlier renovation, possibly in the 1880s. Regardless of the renovation dates, school records indicate this building was most likely used simultaneously as a church and school as late as 1918. Around 1920, the building began to be used by the Primm family as for agricultural purposes including a barn for hanging tobacco. This use continued throughout the twentieth century until the City of Brentwood acquired the property. Current plans call for the building to be returned to a place of learning, primarily for school groups.