

## History of Hobbs' Hill Community

by Jackie Layne Partin

One probably should not write about a certain community named Hobbs' Hill, a suburb of Tracy City in Grundy County, Tennessee, without first explaining from whence the name "Hobbs' Hill" came. Was the hill so named at the time, in the **1840s** and early **1850s**, when Benjamin Wooten and his three children were living in what is now Tracy City – at a time when the Wootens were the only supposed homesteaders in that section of wilderness according to Lucinda "Cinda" Martin in the book, *John Gamp?* Was Hobbs' Hill a generic name because the hill became covered with families holding the surname, "Hobbs"? We get the "Hill" portion of the name because there is a rather steep grade and long climb to the top of a hill, but why use the surname, *Hobbs*?

My first goal, to get a Hobbs family living or associated with the hill, wasn't that easy. Ezekiel Hobbs, Sr. was born around **1776** in Washington County, Virginia. In the **1810, 1820, and 1830** Census records he lived in Washington County, but in **1836**, he and his son Christopher Hobbs paid their yearly taxes in Warren County, TN. Maybe we can draw from this information that they moved to Tennessee between **1830** and **1836** placing the Hobbs family in the Warren County Census record in **1840**.

Next in our search for early Hobbs settlers in Grundy County, we read that Christopher Hobbs, Richard Hobbs, Adrian Hobbs, Ezekiel Hobbs, Jr. and their father Ezekiel Hobbs, Sr. signed their names on the **1843** petition list to form the county of Grundy from a part of **Warren County**. Since Grundy did become a county the next year, **1844**, we then can understand why Ezekiel Hobbs, Sr. (**1776**) was listed as having died in **Grundy County**, TN, March **1850**, according to the U. S. Federal Census Mortality Schedule. The schedule was for districts 2, 3, and 8 of the newly formed Grundy County. We need to also mention a James Hobbs who signed the petition and may well have been another one of Ezekiel Hobbs, Sr.'s sons. These Hobbses were probably living in Northcutt's Cove or Tarlton Valley which overnight became part of the new county.

One must remember that just because these Hobbs families wanted the State to form a new county, it did not particularly mean that they had to leave their homesteads. Their sections of farmlands could simply become land in the newly formed Grundy County, but it would not have become land in the area that was later to become known as Hobbs' Hill. Some of the plateau already belonged to Marion County in **1844** and stayed that way right on up to **1868**. In the *Acts of Tennessee Chapter 204*, it is stated in the last sentence concerning the formation of Grundy County, "...*Provided, that nothing in this act contained, shall be so construed as to authorize or attach any portion of the territory now*

*belonging to Marion County, to the county of Grundy."* This in and of itself would not have allowed Ezekiel Hobbs, Sr. to have died on what is today (2017) known as Hobbs' Hill because the hill was in Marion County at the time of his death.

In 1860, Ezekiel Jr. was married, had several children, (*one being Ezekiel Polk Richard Hobbs, or "E. P."*), lived in Grundy County, and received his mail through the Pelham Post Office; thus, he was not living on the hill near Tracy City, a town that was so new that it probably would have never been mentioned on anyone's lips if Thomas "Tommie" Benton Wooten had left the groundhog alone instead of digging for it subsequently bringing up a black substance called coal. Then there was an Irishman named Leslie Kennedy who on one of his jaunts through the wilderness on this plateau saw outcroppings of coal. Leslie had been on the plateau as far back as 1850. After announcing his findings to many others, the rush began to see what got here first, the railroad or lots of money.

Ezekiel, Jr. and Ally/Ala found themselves in the midst of a sad civil war wherein one needed to carefully watch every word that came from his or her mouth. Even here in Tracy City, the residents were divided in their allegiances. Closest neighbors nervously greeted their friends or family members unless they were absolutely certain where their sympathies lay.

In 1870, Sanders Hobbs was living in District 11 and getting mail at Tracy City. This is the Hobbs family we needed to find living in the right district and getting the mail at the right post office. Her children still at home were Zekiel P., John, Mary, Lawson, Francis L. and twin sister, Sarah B. Hobbs. Why Ala/Ally's name is **Sanders** in the *Census* record is left for other researchers. Now we finally have a Hobbs family on the hill in question. Since her children seem to be the same ones listed in the 1860 Census, one might assume that her husband, Ezekiel Hobbs, Jr., had passed away

On July 27, 1871, in Grundy County, E. P. Hobbs married Bitha Meeks, daughter of James and Nancy (Smith) Meek. Children were born to the couple, and according to Bob and Betty Sherwood's book, *Law Enforcers in Grundy Co. TN 1844-2008*, in 1880 through 1884, Ezekiel Polk "E. P" Hobbs was elected to two terms as Sheriff of Grundy County giving him a way to support those children. The family first lived in Pelham Valley and later lived on the corner of Altamont and Laurel Streets in Tracy City on a portion of town lot # 204 (Ben Lomand Telephone Co. stands there now.) However, E. P. and Bitha sold their house and lot on May 8, 1881, for \$675, so we now know that descendants from Ezekiel Hobbs, Sr. got their mail on the plateau in Tracy City and lived within walking distance of the hill. Actually, the foot of the hill began its ascension in downtown Tracy City; one could walk a little distance up into the "Heading," climb

upward a little to what is now the “Hillcrest” apartments, and as the name implies, one’s feet are planted on the crest of the hill. Hobbs’ Hill overlooks the small town of Tracy City.

In **1886**, E. P. Hobbs and his wife Tabitha “Bitha” (Meeks) Hobbs sold one-half acre of land on Colony Road, district 11, to Houston Patrick. What we today call Hobbs’ Hill Road was formerly the old Colony Rd. and occasionally called the Dunlap Rd. This half acre land was actually on the hill, but does not yet mention the name *Hobbs’ Hill*. At least we have a Hobbs who owned land on the hill.

Dear Reader, if one studies the Hobbs’ Hill Cemetery surveys, surprisingly no Hobbs names will be present. There are always many graves in old cemeteries with fieldstone markers absent of names and other data, but unless I overlooked a stone with data, there are no interred people with the surname Hobbs. Now I found that to be so interesting. And as we continue on with our history, we are certainly going to be shy of the surname Hobbs.

Between **1884** and **1886**, E. P. and Bitha moved to Temple, Bell County, Texas although E. P.’s name still appeared in Grundy County deed movements up into the early **1890s**. In **1900**, E. P. was a deputy constable in Bell County.



**Ezekiel Polk**

**Richard**

**Hobbs**

**(1848 – 1936)**

Hopefully all of the above writings set the stage for Ezekiel Hobbs, Sr. at least being the progenitor of the Hobbs descendants, some of whom settled on a hill above

Tracy City which as of the **1868** boundary line movement between Marion and Grundy Counties put that hill in Grundy County. We know as of this writing that E. P. Hobbs owned land on the hill, so with our circumstantial evidence, we may assume that the hill was named for the aforementioned Hobbs families.

Around **1955** a Norris Burr Brown descendant, John Beecher Brown, shared a memory; he spoke of a great revival in **1888** held in the **Kennedy School** by Norris Burr Brown. The revival with its overflowing crowd showed Rev. N. B. Brown that there was a need for lots of good Bible preaching in the area on the hill. Rev. Brown had no building wherein to speak except the Kennedy School building that by **1888** was empty. Sarah Kennedy, widow of Leslie Kennedy, got her Tennessee Public School teaching certificate in **1884**, but the Kennedy School was active before that year. The last documents in the area with Sarah's signature on them are two deeds where she sold two acres each to Lewis and Amos Cope on what became known as (Amos) Cope Hollow Road; she wasn't even living in Tennessee, so someone else signed her name. Today (**2017**) the road borders the Hobbs' Hill Cemetery on the south. These deeds were signed on **Dec. 1, 1885**. This tells us that she still owned four acres of land on Hobbs' Hill when she left the State. Sarah took her five children and moved to Texas where she died around **1914** and was buried near her mother, Elizabeth Sawyers Willis in an unmarked grave.

**Tidbits** for interest follows: *"On the 26<sup>th</sup> of **June 1884**, Mr. Roberts was united in marriage with Miss Jennie McGovern, a daughter of James McGovern, and to them have been born five children: Lizzie, Isaac, Carl, Cora, and Everett. The parents are leading members of the **Mt. Pleasant Methodist Episcopal church, South**, in which Mr. Roberts is now serving as steward, while socially he affiliates with the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and the Royal Arcanum, and Politically is identified with the Democratic party."* Another interesting **1906** tidbit: *"Revs. Burgess and Bird, of the M. E. Church, **North**, are holding quite an interesting and successful revival at the **Mt. Pleasant Church**."*

According to a Roberts' descendant, Mr. Philip Hawkins Roberts, Sr. donated one acre of land for the group of Christians to start a new church building that would accommodate the large number of church members. Another note from the same Brown descendant was his memory of the original church building being built in **1896**. I will insert a short newspaper article to support his memory. In the *Tracy City News*, **October 19, 1893**, we read: *"A protracted meeting conducted by Revs. N. B. Brown and E. H. Bennett at the **Hobbs school house** near here is being largely attended and is daily increasing in interest. There have been quite a number of conversions up to date."*

From this tiny article we learn that the name Hobbs was used as early as **1893**, but we have no mention here as to the name of the church. However, the ministers told us

that they needed a *church house* because in **1893** they were still meeting in a school house. Interestingly, we can see that there was a school of sorts that met in the **Hobbs school house**. We also have no mention yet of the name **Hobbs' Hill** – the two words together have not been seen yet. Whether John Beecher Brown's memory of the date **1888** is correct or not, we will agree that a religious movement had begun on that hill as early as **1893**, if not earlier. We can also learn that E. H. Bennett was Eli Harlan Bennett, another citizen of Tracy City, who helped N. B. Brown with his preaching during the "great awakening" on that hill.



**Rev. E. H. Bennett 's Burial Stone,  
Gowen Cemetery, Latimer Co., OK**



**Eli Harlan Bennett  
(1825-1905)**

Riley Bradford Roberts, son of Philip and Asenith (Pearson) Roberts, and his wife Jennie (McGovern) Roberts were "...leading members of the *Mt. Pleasant Methodist Episcopal church, South, in which Mr. Roberts is now serving as steward...*" (excerpt taken from *Compendium of Local Biography, Grundy County, Tennessee*). The first edition of the

book was published in **1898**. We now have a name of the new church on the hill, not Hobbs' Hill M. E. Church, North but **Mt. Pleasant** M. E. Church, South. As a steward, R. B. Roberts would have advised the pastor in decision making. Please note that this group of disciples were not Congregational Methodist Church followers, but followers of what we know today as the United Methodist Church.

*The Nashville American, 12 Sep 1907, published "NEW SCHOOL HOUSES – Contracted for by the Board of Education of Grundy County. Tracy City, Tenn., Sept. 11 – The Board of Education for Grundy County met in the office of Jeff D. Fults, County Superintendent, here yesterday. Contracts for building school-houses on Hobbs' Hill a suburb of Tracy City, and at Altamont were let. Plans of these buildings were similar, each to have two rooms 30 X 50 and 20 X 30 feet, respectively, with vestibule in front..."* We do find the hill called Hobbs' Hill in this news article.

After serving the Christians for a few years as a meeting house, the Kennedy School was left empty when in **1896** the doors opened on the new church building. Before **1907**, the building used for a school was called the Mt. Pleasant school with three directors, F. M. Nunley, Kelly Summers, and Pete McGovern. In **1897**, the principal was C. W. Hembree with teachers, B. F. Gilbert and Miss Della Nunley as assistants, so we must assume that the Mt. Pleasant School was not as familiar to the name Hobbs' Hill as we would have expected. The land under the school was 1.6 acres. We can also assume that the school was not in good condition and not large enough to accommodate the student number of 68 enrolled in **1897**. Then on **September 17, 1907**, a mention is made of one acre of Leslie and Sarah Kennedy's former land, about a mile from Tracy City, being sold to the Board of Education of Grundy County by then owners T. B. and Lottie Roddy – **Warranty Deed S-311**. The county commissioners were J. D. Wiley (*Tracy City area*), W. D. Bennett (*Monteagle area*), L. A. Carden, (*Pelham area*), W. S. Walker, (*Tarlton area*) and R. T. Dykes (*Beersheba/Altamont area*). I have to admit after years of searching for the actual location of the Kennedy School House, I don't know yet where it was. Since Leslie and Sarah Kennedy lived on Hobbs' Hill before his death, and since she was quite keen on teaching, I still believe it may have stood where later the Hobbs' Hill School was built. Thus, history said goodbye to the Kennedy School and hello to the Hobbs' Hill School. According to Ike Woodward's booklet, a summary of news happenings between **1893** and **1910**, in December **1908** the concrete school building was completed on Hobbs' Hill.



**Hobbs' Hill School (1988) – photo courtesy of Janelle Layne Taylor**

The Hobbs' Hill School ceased to be used as a school, but the Board of Education remains the owner of the building today (2017). The trustees and community are allowed to use the building as a church or civic center so long as any activities held there are non-profit. The building must be kept in good condition, so money received at any scheduled event will go into the maintenance of the building. Any other receipts must be used for charitable purposes.



**Hobbs Hill School/Community Center in 2017 (without metal awning on the right end of the building--jackie)**

Now let's turn our thoughts to the study of the religious establishment known in 2016 as the Hobbs' Hill United Methodist Church. Some years before 1907, the hill in question, not the church, became known as **Hobbs' Hill** as seen in an **August 1, 1907**,

one-year-lease between the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company and the **Mount Pleasant** Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The lease year would end on **July 31, 1908**. The second party in the lease was the trustees of the church; they were John McGovern, W. P. Roberts, and W. H. Sweeton. In the lease agreement, the tract of land was on “**Hobbs’ Hill**” a suburb of Tracy City. Hobbs’ Hill was written in quotes as shown, causing me to wonder if it was a reasonably new name for a suburb. This indicates that the name, Hobbs’ **Hill** predated **1907**. The land also included a church building called only the “**Mount Pleasant Church**” and a **cemetery**.

Interestingly, the original church and cemetery were not known to be associated with the M. E. Church, South until **1907**, and there is no record in the Methodist published records for the name **Hobbs’ Hill M. E. Church, South** until **1934**. On **May 10, 1934**, The Tennessee Land Company rendered a Quit Claim deed to “...*W. B. Robertson, H. P. Buford and B. S. Roddy, Trustees of Hobbs Hill Church, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, a tract of land situated on Hobbs Hill east of the Colony Road and located approximately one mile northeast of the town of Tracy City, in the 5<sup>th</sup> Civil District of Grundy County, Tennessee...Provided, however, that said premises shall be used, kept, maintained and disposed of as a places of Divine worship for the use of the ministry and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, subject to the discipline, the usage and ministerial appointments of said Church, and by the annual Conference within whose bound the said premises are situated....*”

I suspect that the Mt. Pleasant Church was not in a conference; my reason being that the coal company, not a Methodist Conference, owned the church building and the cemetery. Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad was actually leasing a church building and a cemetery to three men who had been appointed, or appointed themselves, to be trustees of said church and cemetery. Folks, what do you do when you own a church and a large number of graves, and you need to make a profit on your product? Well, what about trying to lease the church and cemetery? That probably did happen in **1907**, but there is no record of the lease being renewed.

Let’s talk about the cemetery that the Tennessee Coal, Iron and R. R. Company agreed to lease. By the time the lease was written, the cemetery had many burials. I will list the **known** burials up to the year **1907** when the church and attached cemetery was known as Mt. Pleasant.

**1888**—Martha Nunley; **1889**—James McGovern and Jessie Nunley; **1892**—Bessie McGovern, Anna Smith, William A. Smith; **1893**—Francis Tucker; **1894**—Joe Washington Bivens, John Nunley; **1896**—Conry Infant, Marshall McGovern, Harvey McGovern, Martha Nunley, and Bessie Lee Roberts; **1897**—Willie McGovern, Nathan Sweeton; **1898**—Hester Conry, Edgar Stotts, and Charlie Clinton Roberts; **1899**—Lena Adams,



James McGovern; **1900**— Cynthia Tampico (Nunley) Sweeton and infant son, Cecil Lela Hais Bivens, George L. Bivens, William Calvin Reeves, and Eliza Jane (Myers) McGovern; **1901**— George Argo, **1902**— Ada Argo, Ader Argo, Thomas G. Abernathy, Della Lockhart, Louise Bradshear; **1903**— T. C. Brannan, Clark Dishroon; **1904**— Lenah J. Brannan and A. H. Brannan, Effie Brown, Gracie Fults; **1905**— John D. Geary, Jim Nunley, J. S. Fults; **1906**— Willie Grace Brown, Susie Henderson, Joe Perry Bivens and Evelyn Geary. From this we can see that the burials started around the “enlightment” period. Some burials were in unmarked graves. The most prominent burial site is that of the first wife and a child of John Thomas “J. T.” Brannan with its wrought iron fence. I knew “J. T.” — what a character!

Let’s deviate a little and add a newspaper obituary announcement for *“Will Roberts, a prominent and influential citizen, died Saturday afternoon at the Cumberland Mountain Sanitarium. Deep sorrow is felt throughout the entire county, where this pious gentleman was held in the highest esteem. Mr. Roberts’ death resulted from bladder troubles, and during his confinement of several months at the local infirmary, he underwent several surgical operations. For the past few weeks he had gradually been growing weaker and the announcement of his death came as no great surprise to his many friends. Mr. Roberts was 39 years of age and was engaged in mine contracting at the East Fork mines. Prior to engaging in this work he conducted a general merchandise store for a number of years on Hobbs’ Hill and it was at this time he made such a host of friends by his honest and fair dealings. He was ever active in church circles and had been a consistent member of the Methodist Church for a number of years. Deceased is survived by his widow and five children; three brothers and three sisters. Funeral services were conducted yesterday afternoon at Hobbs’ Hill Church by Revs. Reagan and Sutton, after which interment took place in the church yard burying grounds in the presence of a large concourse of friends. The Order of Odd Fellows, of which deceased was a member, attended in a body.”* (quoted from *The Nashville American*, **March 31, 1908**.) His grave stone gives his name as W. R. Roberts (**Sep 6, 1866—Mar 28, 1906**), married to Della (Abernathy) Roberts. There is a discrepancy in the death year. Dr. George Douglas Hayes operated the Cumberland Mountain Sanitarium which stood on the grounds of the now American Legion building and Dr. Randy Littell’s office building.

The first volume and 5<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Mountain Herald*, April 28, 1910, gladly printed the news that trickled down the hill from Mt. Pleasant. Obviously, the community was known as Mt. Pleasant possibly before the new church was built and on into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. From the newspaper:

*“Mt. Pleasant – Rev. W. A. Stroud preached a very interesting sermon Sunday evening to a large congregation.; Eugene Morton of Tarlton was in our midst last Friday.; ...Mr. and Mrs. Will Meeks were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Jack **Hobbs** Sunday.; Mr. and Mrs. Isham Brown visited Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Brown Sunday.; Mr. Vick Tate of Beersheba Springs is visiting friends here.; Mrs. Parlee Nunley and Miss Cora Biles visited Mrs. A. W. Campbell Sunday.; Herbert Brown and France Meeks left Monday for Kentucky.; Maud Nunley and Sula McGovern were guests of Mrs. Lizzie Holt Saturday.; Miss Myrtle Roberts was visiting Miss Mozella Roberts Sunday.; R. J. Carden and Sidney Crisp were on our streets Sunday.; Funston Brown spent Saturday night with Willie Brown.”*

John Beecher “J. B.” Brown was the publisher and later the editor of the *Mountain Herald* newspaper which seemed at the time to be a great rival of the *Mrs. Grundy* newspaper – maybe one of those “Democrat/Republican” things. Willie Brown mentioned in the excerpt was a brother to Beecher (as he was more commonly called). Willie was William L. Brown who is buried in the Summerfield Cemetery near Monteagle.

The general consensus is that the name Mount Pleasant was chosen by the original pastor and members, just as some folks chose to call a certain other suburb of Tracy City “Hoot Hill,” which was in old deeds called *Hooterville*. Norris Burr Brown, born on **November 17, 1849** in Warren County, TN was the first known minister for the Mount Pleasant Church and continued to pastor when the church became known as the Mount Pleasant Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He was a known Methodist preacher and a member of the Tennessee Conference. He was the son of William Sanford and Nancy (Dykes) Brown. He married Josephine “Josie” Johnson on **August 14, 1870**, in Grundy County, TN.

In November **1915**, Mrs. Josie Brown went to Oakley, Overton County, TN where she spent the winter with her husband who was located there for that conference year.



**L to R: Brothers**

**Wesley Brown**

**Jackson Brown**

**Rev. Norris Burr Brown**

On January 7, **1916** Rosannalee “Annie” (Roberts) McGovern, wife of Pete McGovern, died and was buried in the **Hobbs’ Hill** Cemetery. The following excerpt from her obituary gives us a little bit more of the church’s history. *“Since early childhood Mrs. McGovern has been a faithful and attentive member of the Methodist Church on Hobbs Hill, and before she died told her friends that her religious life had not been in vain, and she died in the full triumph of a living faith.”* The name “Mt. Pleasant” was not used in her obituary. Annie was born in **1865** and married in **1883** at the age of eighteen. The editor of the newspaper wrote that Annie had been a faithful member of the Methodist Church on Hobbs’ Hill since early childhood which would have been between **1865** and **1883**. Does this obituary tell us that the church met in the Mt. Pleasant vicinity much longer than John Beecher Brown’s father, N. B. Brown, mentioned? Charles Radford Wade, minister of the gospel, officiated at Annie’s funeral. He was the appointed minister for the year **1914-1915**. There are no records afterwards for his work as a circuit rider for the Methodist Church on Hobbs’ Hill.

In the *Mrs. Grundy* newspaper, **August 26, 1920**, we read this short note, *“Mrs. Lizzie Holt attended church last Sunday at Mt. Pleasant.”* Rev. N. B. Brown was not the speaker that day for he visited his brother W. L. Brown and preached in that community, possibly Summerfield Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It is believed that Sampson Dewey Organ, son-in-law to N. B. Brown, preached at Mt. Pleasant Methodist between **1920** and **1923** and on many other occasions. He was an active worker and zealous for the growth of the group on Hobbs’ Hill.

On **June 21, 1923**, "Z. E. Griswold of Mt. Pleasant ..." visited Hubbard's Cove. We can see from this note and the following that the use of **Mt. Pleasant** still lingered, but in due time most people would not be able to tell where the vicinity of Mt. Pleasant was. Hobbs' Hill soon became the replacement name for the area.

In the **August 16, 1923**, issue of the *Mrs. Grundy* newspaper, we read "**Little Child Dies – Barnell** (Bonnell—jp), *the little 4 year old son of Dewey Organ died last Saturday of pneumonia. Funeral services were conducted by Revs. Cousar and Curtis. Burial was in the Hobbs Hill Cemetery Sunday.*" Little Earl Bonnell was the second child lost by Sampson Dewey & Margaret Pauline (Brown) Organ. In all, the couple lost four children, Alice Ray (**1918**), Earl Bonnell (**1923**), Margaret Cornelia (**1928**), and Sanford Dewey Organ (**1947**). All are buried in the Hobbs Hill Cemetery. Their mother was a daughter of Norris Burr Brown. She married Sampson Dewey Organ in Grundy County on **Mar. 2, 1915**; in **1918** Dewey registered for the WWI Draft in Grundy County; and in **1920** he was a coalminer in Grundy County. In **1930** he was a pastor in the Methodist Church in Smithville, TN, and in **1940** he was ministering in Livingston, TN. Later he ministered several years at the City Road Methodist Church in Davidson County, TN. The Organ family is mentioned because Dewey and Pauline were a tremendous help and encouragement to the Mount Pleasant/Hobbs Hill Methodist Church. They had a house on the hill that was used for frequent visits and years later for Brown reunions.

Sampson Dewey Organ died in **1978** and took his place with his four children in the Hobbs' Hill Cemetery. Margaret Pauline (Brown) Organ joined her whole family in **1984**. Her mother, Martha Josephine Brown, had died in **1923**, and her father Rev. Norris Burr Brown died in **1941**.

During the coal miner upheaval in **1905**, the foothills of Hobbs Hill served an interesting purpose. *The Tennessean – 8 Sep 1905--"Tracy City, Tenn. Sept 7 – During the past few days the force of men at Camp Estelle has been considerably reduced...275 men now in camp...this morning there was artillery practice at Camp Estelle, 1,200 rounds of ammunition being used with the Gatling gun, which was trained on **Hobbs' Hill**, a distance of about 1,000 yards, being torn into shreds. Other fine marksmanship was displayed by the gunners of the artillery corps."*

The community of Mt. Pleasant/Hobbs' Hill had at least four stores in its early days; Thomas Geary, N. C. Nunley, William R. Roberts, and Monroe "Mon" Stotts had stores at different times. If an area has two or three stores, a church, a school, a cemetery and lots of close-knit families like the Roberts, Hamptons, Nunleys, Parsons, Sweeten, Browns, Kennedys, McGoverns and several other families, then it had to be doing something right.



**“Mon” Stotts Store on Hobbs’ Hill; L to R: Dock Fults, Ashley Brown, Grover Fults, A. W. Campbell, Poke Brown, Monroe Stotts, Sidney Lockhard, Joe Geary, Sam Cannon, & John Crabtree**

Now let’s try to fill in some history from the Mt. Pleasant Methodist Church period to the today’s name, Hobbs’ Hill Community Church. There obviously was a problem throughout the years deciding just what the handful of people had on their hands. In an old newspaper clipping (1914) we read: *“Children’s Day will be observed by the Mt. Pleasant, (Hobbs’ Hill) Sunday School next Sunday, June 14. Everybody invited.”* The author of this announcement felt a need to let the readers know that the Mt. Pleasant Sunday School was the Hobbs’ Hill Sunday School – one and the same.

Moving along in our story, on Wednesday night, **February 13, 1952**, the little church building was rattled by a large oak tree when tornadic winds uprooted the old oak that shifted the small church off its foundation. *Nashville Banner--“Decherd, Tenn., Feb. 14-- A “Texas Twister” hit this community and scattered points in four other counties late last night, leaving three persons dead, about 15 hospitalized today and a wrecked freight train...Heavy damage reports were received from Franklin, Lincoln, Moore, Grundy and Giles Counties...Next in the path of the twister was Monteagle, where it tore down the main street, snapping many large trees, whose fall was responsible for most of the damage in that area...”*

I am a story teller, so it enlivens me to have experienced a portion of one of my stories and tell about it. Something worse than normal was going on that February night. There was no need for any blankets or covering, for the temperature inside the house and

outdoors was so warm. Mama had all three wooden doors open with on only the screen doors between her and whatever she was searching for in the skies. We four children were all in bed, but Mama wasn't, nor would she be for a long time. She spent her night pacing from one screen door and window to another. As a nine-year-old, my silent thoughts were for her, not what was going on with the weather. I had seen storms and bolts of electrical charges run down the lines on King Street in Monteagle. The skies displayed a radiance of blue lightning. Mama plainly was disturbed, and she seemed to hover more closely to us, her charges. The storm did not alarm me, but the possibility of something happening to Mama frightened me as I lay wide-eyed watching every move she made throughout our small house. Oddly enough, there is no remembrance of a word being spoken between us. She hoped that I and my siblings were asleep and had no knowledge of the danger that could be approaching.

Then morning came; what a beautiful day it was! A quick trip to our outdoor toilet let me know that on Valentine's Day **1952**, the *buttercups*, as Mama always called them, were surprisingly in full bloom along the path that led to the toilet. I remember thinking that it was now Spring; Winter had gone. Soon Mama sent us off to school; it was then that I saw what kept her on full alert during the night. Just beyond the corner of our small lot was a huge oak tree that had decided to uproot itself and take a violent recline across our road. A huge hole was near Mrs. Vina Rogers' porch, but the tree's massive top and leafless branches were at the Ernest Wooten front porch across King Street. I'd never seen such a thing before. Was this, and others like it, why Mama walked the floor much of the night? The thing that had brought her great concern, made her four children happy as squirrels, for we frolicked up and down and over the huge tree as though it were still standing.

Morning brought a lot of sadness to many families in Summerfield when the destruction was seen. The tornadic winds had traveled on to Hobbs' Hill where a large tree was uprooted and fell close enough to the Methodist building to thrust it off its foundation. Maybe it was a good thing in the long run. Maybe others volunteered to help get the church house back where it belonged. Maybe some lingered and became volunteers to the struggling church.



**Hobbs' Hill Methodist Church on Feb. 14, 1952 after a tornadic wind forced a large tree into the building moving it off its foundation**

Lanny Bell and I talked at length about his memories of attending the Methodist Church on Hobbs' Hill in the late **1950s**. His father and mother brought great strength to the one-room, outdoor toilet, situation at that time. I visualized a quite small building surrounded by a cemetery. It is somewhat like the question of which came first—the chicken or the egg. In this case which came first—the church building or the cemetery? There was little wiggle room when some of the group decided to enlarge the building without getting too near the graves. Where there is a will, there is a way.

Additions of a restroom, kitchen and dining area with a folding wall that made two classrooms was a great contribution and exhibited the tenacity of those who wanted the church building to stay on that hill, and stay it did. Others jumped in and offered labor, for it was not an easy project.



**Work had begun with the Bell, Meeks, Partin and many other families participating.**







**A happy group of believers prepared and determined to carry on for the Lord**

Nothing in this world stays the same; change is inevitable, even in the religious realm of life. Only God is constant. The Methodist Church that had filled the pews so many years, waned in membership until the doors were closed. Clayton Jones was one of several preachers who taught at this venue. The building stood empty of activities until **January 2017** when the Hobbs' Hill Methodist Church became known as the Hobbs' Hill Community Church. John Butner became the pastor of the new church, and the doors were once again opened to all. He remained with his mission work for a year or so. Currently (**2020**), Kip Short of Tracy City is the new pastor of the Community Church after being voted into that office around **2019**.



**Hobbs' Hill Methodist Church (2016); Hobbs' Hill Community Church (2017)**

On **May 15, 2017**, the Murfreesboro District of the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church rendered a Quit Claim deed for the Hobbs' Hill United Methodist Church real property to the trustees of the Hobbs' Hill Cemetery Association that is unknown to me and impossible to find out who the trustees are in **2020**. I have been told that whoever owns/operates the church renders care to the cemetery; a special fund for upkeep has been developed and donations are accepted. To me, this implies that there was no real understanding about the church building ownership, no warranty deed, but should something come up in the future concerning any ownership the Methodist District of the Tennessee Conference may have had in the building, this quit claim deed relinquished any involvement in the Hobbs' Hill church no matter what name was over the door.

The Old Convict Farm, the head of Slaughter Pen Hollow, the Old Tar Road, Melissa Rock, the tragic death of Mr. Floyd Gross, and the lives of many other hard-working men and women who called Hobbs' Hill home could have been included in this story. However, one can never tell it all.