

Historic Area : **Tent U.P. Church**
St. John's Episcopal Church

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, BROOKE COUNTY





STRAIN CEMETERY (above)

Strain Cemetery is located on St. John's Road. The land was given by John Strain, and consisted of "one acre for the burials and an acre surrounding it, fenced in for protection." Apparently this wish was not carried through, as the entire cemetery is shown here, and no fence is in evidence.

OLDE ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL

Olde St. John's Church was established in 1793 by pioneer missionary, the Rev. Dr. Joseph Doddridge, as the first Episcopal Church west of the Allegheny Mountains. The present building is the third to be occupied by the congregation and is an example of simple Colonial architecture.

Services, according to the Panhandle History, were first held in the Wiggins home, near the stream of Cross Creek.

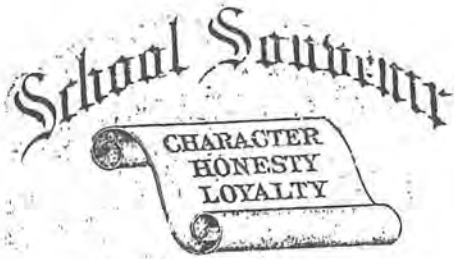
Most early records have been lost, so that an accurate history of the congregation is not possible. The story has been handed down that

a log building was erected near the intersection of what is now Eldersville Road and Morton Road, in 1793. Legend also says that a frame church was built at the present site of the brick edifice, which dates back to 1849. The bricks were burned on the premises.

Many pioneer families were instrumental in the early beginnings of the church. A

Parish register dating to March 22, 1834, reads as its first entry, "James Wallace, transferred to John Hendricks, William Baxter, John Handliss and William Elliott, one acre for St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church." (Records of Brooke County, Virginia.)

The Doddridge name has always been associated with Christianity. Joseph became a Methodist Circuit Rider when he was eighteen years of age, traveling with Francis Asbury, helping to establish churches. He died November 9, 1826 and is buried in Brooke Cemetery.



*Cross Creek District
Brook Co.
1917*

May the tiny seeds of wisdom,
Sown within the school-house here,
Find sure lodgement in your memories
And increase from year to year. —



Like a road which has no end
Is the course of learning's way,
Here a hill and there a bend,
Vistas changing every day.

When we meet to celebrate
The closing of this term's career,
'Tis but the shutting of the gate
That marks our journey of a year.

(The school was a one-room building, not the type shown in sketch.)

Good Will Schoolhouse was located on a road part of which is now abandoned. It left Eldersville Road near the Kaul property, which was famous for many years for its tall graceful poplar trees that lined

GOOD WILL SCHOOL

Cross Creek District
Brooke County, W. Va.

F. W. CAMPBELL, Teacher

PUPILS

Mary Stanoski
Nora Newell
Margaretta Brown
Marie Russell
Martha Wacker

Martha Latimer
Frank Newell
Joel Harless
Edward Stanoski
Robert Hobbs
Shirley Carter

George Russell
Herman Russell
Arnold Harless
Willard Harless
Clarence Russell

T. A. Burton, Co. Supt.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

W. A. Strain H. B. Mahan
Chas. Swertzferger



But still the road leads on before.
The gate which closed upon the past
Gives us entrance yet to more
Vistas for next year than last.

Travel there both young and old,
Whether days be foul or fair --
Horizons new their views unfold,
Truths' revealing everywhere.

The journey of a short school year
Is but a little episode,
A pleasant jaunt, with memories dear,
On learning's never ending road.

the curve near St. John's Cemetery. The road wound down the hill toward Cross Creek. One section branched off and cut through the Patterson property, meeting again the Eldersville Road at Walker Road.



ABOVE

Built in 1839 by Thomas Donovan, Jr., this stately brick home stands off Tent Church Road, on what was known for years as the John Mechling farm. The Kevin Felton family now enjoys its lovely rural atmosphere.



LEFT

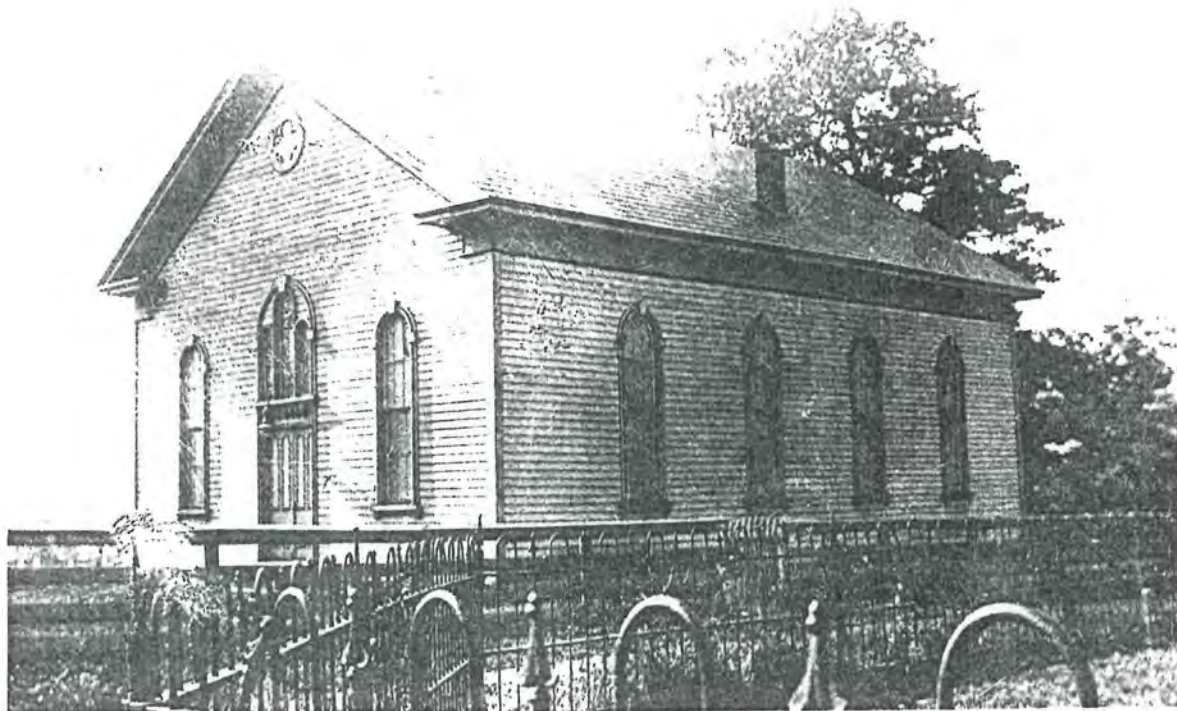
The home of Parkinson and Amelia "Mealy" Wright Boles was not so fortunate. It was located off Puntney Ridge Road, just off Tent Church Road, and has been torn down and the land stripped for coal.

Just beyond the once-beautiful spot where this stately house centered the broad green lawn are the ruins of the old Murchland family cemetery.



THE FIRST TENT CHURCH

The first church erected was of hewn logs and measured 30 x 36. Date is unknown. It replaced a small stand or pulpit closed on three sides, probably giving rise to the term, Tent. Seats were arranged among the forest trees for the congregation. The log building was used until 1873.



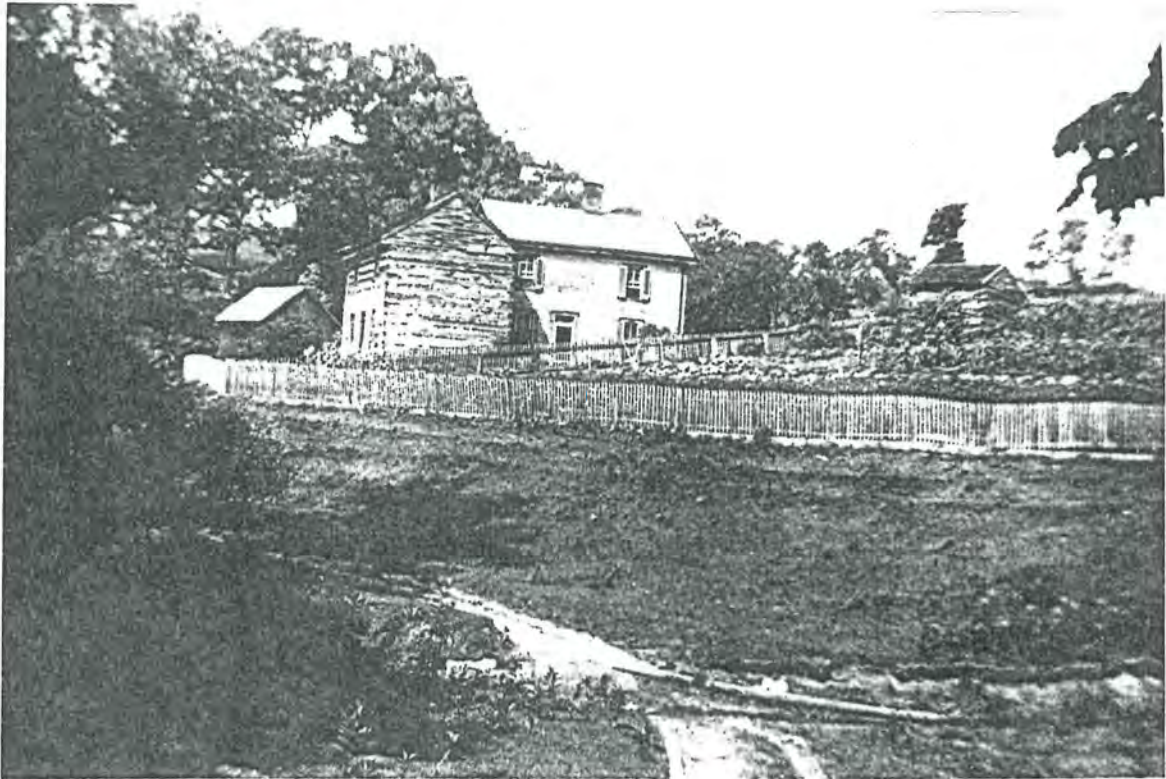


Side view of the Hayes Homestead

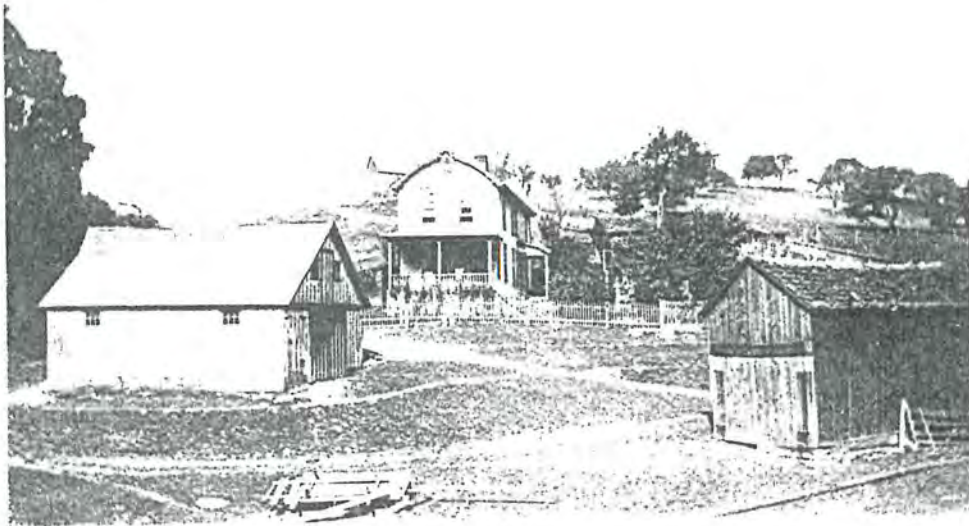
The ancestor of the Hayes family of Brooke County was David Hayes, born about 1717 in Sussex County, New Jersey. He settled in Washington County, PA in 1785 and purchased land known as "Hayes Bottom" in what is today the community of Cherry Valley on the waters of Raccoon Creek. Before his death in 1792, he owned a thousand acres of land in Smith and Mt. Pleasant Townships. He had 8 sons and 5 daughters. Six of his sons served in the army during the Revolution with son John 's death resulting from wounds received in the battle of Germantown. It is from David's son, Thomas, that the Brooke County Hayes family descends. Thomas was twice married and to his second wife, Elizabeth Clifford Hayes, Enoch was born. Thomas was the father of 20 children.

Enoch Hayes was a member of the Raccoon Presbyterian Church at Candor during his youth, later transferring his membership to Cross Creek. When he purchased his land in Brooke County, he continued to attend the Cross Creek Church, traveling each Sunday a distance of 9 miles. About 1849 a church was erected in the Kidd's Mill area of Jefferson Township, Washington County . This church bearing the name of Pine Grove was a mere mile or two from Enoch's home and to it he transferred his membership and his allegiance. But this was a time of short tempers and high emotions as issues of slavery and temperance became the order of the day. A flag-raising over the door of the Pine Grove Church created a near riot and some of the members blamed Enoch Hayes for the incident. Rather than cause a problem, Enoch took his dismission to the Three Springs Congregation at Paris, PA, even though it meant traveling 5 miles each Sabbath day. At the departure of Enoch Hayes, the small congregation at Pine Grove felt a void which was never filled and by 1886, Pine Grove was no more. But at Three Springs, Enoch HAYES was welcomed with open arms and almost immediately made a ruling elder. On the 25th of February in 1872, he entered into his eternal rest. His passing was sudden and peaceful, and as one of his fellow elders later wrote about him, " He walked with God, and was not, for God took him." He was laid to rest in the cemetery at the Tent, just a short distance from his beloved home.

Enoch's son, Levi, married Virginia Campbell, daughter of James M. Campbell, long-time elder and clerk of sessions at the Cove PResbyterian Church and grand-daughter of Robert Campbell who was an early elder at Three Springs. Her great-grandfather, pioneer James Campbell, gave the land on which the first Three SPrings Church was erected. To this devout couple were born 4 children whose devotion to the Tent Church is unparalleled. Mary married Rev. Leonard Richey and upon his death became a minister in her own right. The other children remained loyal to the home church at the Tent. Agnes and Clarence Campbell were faithful to the end while their brother, James Clifford had a perfect attendance record of over 56 years. Their dust lies mingled with that of their ancestors in the churchyard at their beloved Tent.



The Enoch Hayes log house, Tent Church Road, Brooke Co., WV



The Hayes farm in its heyday

Home to three generations of the well-known Hayes family, this serene setting is no more, having given way to the bulldozer and steam shovel of the age of strip mining. After the passing of its first Hayes owners, Enoch and Nancy, and their son Levi and wife, Virginia Campbell Hayes, three of the children of Levi and Virginia remained all of their lives at the old homestead.



This is the scene from tent Church Road looking into the distance at the Hays farm after the coal strippers moved in several years ago.

TENT CHURCH

Tent Church was organized in 1798 as the Cross Creek Congregation of the Associate (Seceder) Presbyterian Church. It was probably organized by Rev. John Anderson, founder of the Pittsburgh Xenia Theological Seminary. The deed of property to the church was dated June 27, 1803. The purchase price was sixteen dollars. The present building was completed in 1873 and dedicated in October of the same year.

Taking part in the dedication service were Revs. John Hood, John T. Brownlee, James C. Campbell and others. In 1858, the Tent with most of the other congregations of the Associate Church entered the union with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the united church took the name of the United Presbyterian Church.

The story of the building of the first log church has been handed down. The year is not known, but it was when whiskey flowed plentifully at such occasions as log rollings, raisings and other gatherings. The story has it that the supply of whiskey ran out before the building was completed, and a boy was immediately dispatched to the nearest "still house" for a new supply.

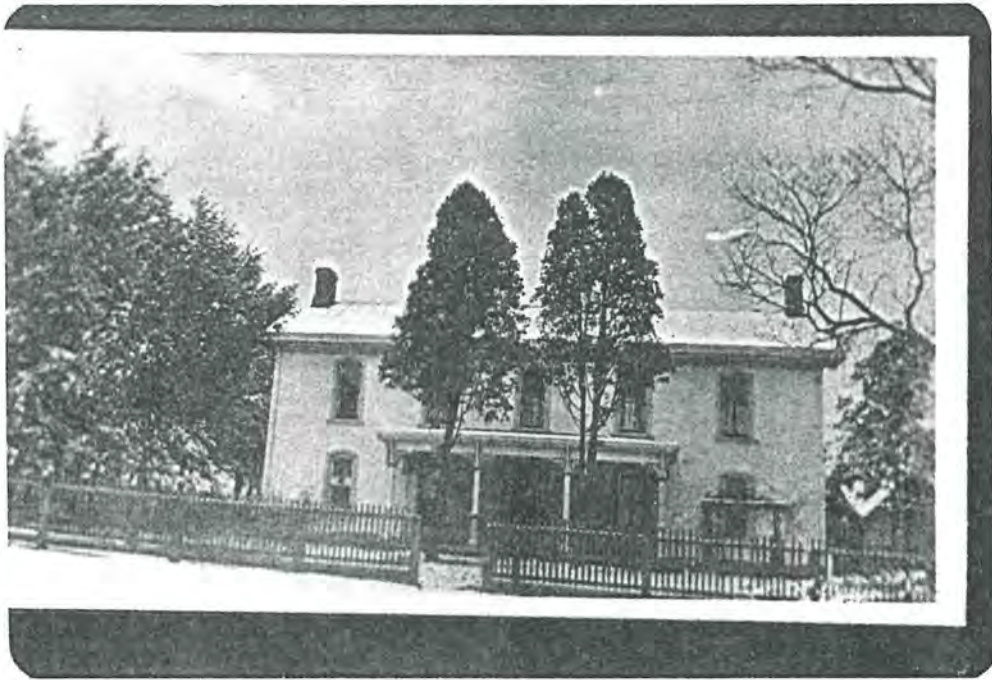
The Tent Church has had many colorful figures during its life span of more than two hundred years. But probably none has been more colorful, or more endearing to the heart, as was the school teacher from Eldersville, Margaret Jane Moore.

Born May 10, 1823, to James and Jane McCarrell Moore, Margaret Jane was off to an unfortunate start. Her mother died when she was born, leaving the little girl to be raised by her grandparents, Thomas McCarrell and his wife. Other relatives took her when old age overtook the grandparents.

She taught at Miller's School in 1853-54 and at Eldersville in 1855-56. Her salary at that time was \$15 per month. Where she taught for 48 more years is not known.

She was decided in her opinions. When Tent Church discussed placing an organ in the worship services, she was adamant. Not until she stood outside the church to hear the music for herself would she enter and again participate. Even with this controversy, Margaret Jane never missed a service, summer or winter, walking the three miles to and from her crude little home in the isolated parts of Jefferson Township.

Margaret Jane lived alone, used nothing but maple sugar, tapping her own trees and boiling down the sap in her own fireplace. She grubbed out locust trees with a mattock, becoming spattered with mud. It was in this condition, skirts tucked up and muddy felt boots bedecking her feet, that she found herself one day when the minister came to call. She invited him in, excused herself and soon appeared in her black alpaca dotted swiss apron and cap. The exact date of her death is unknown. She is buried in the graveyard of the Tent church that she loved so well.



The Wiggins Magee house. Built in 1840 by John Wiggins, son of the pioneer, Edward Wiggins. John's daughter, Margaret, married Silas Magee and named a son John Wiggins Magee. The house was in turn passed to this young man, known simply as "Wiggins Magee" and the house henceforth was known in the area as the Wiggins Magee House.

Edward Wiggins was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1739. He came to America at an early age, marrying Charity Prebles and serving in the army during the Revolution. For his service, he received 400 acres of land in what is now Brooke County, WV, where he and Charity raised their nine children. It was in the Wiggins home that the first services were held for the congregation which was later to become the Tent Church.

Below is a picture of the Wiggins private burial ground as it appears in 1996. There are 7 graves in it but only one old marker remains. The new white stone visible in the center of the picture was placed for Edward Wiggins by a descendant, Sidney Woods, in honor of Edward's Revolutionary service. Edward's wife, Charity is buried at his side. In addition to family members the plot includes the grave of John Decker, the last white man killed by the Indians in Brooke County.



*Not there
now -
but marker
with plus*

The Tent School and the Tent Church stood side by side for many years. The school, on the right of this picture, was built in the early 1800's, of Hemlock, which was native to the area.

The walls were six inches thick. The building had one door and one window in the front, and two windows on each side and in the back.

The roof was of slate. A rope came down through it from the bell tower, allowing the teacher to pull the rope to call the pupils into the school.

The building was bought in 1928 by John Wilbur Freshwater for \$500. He then moved it across the road and donated the spot where it had stood to the church. It has since then been used as a parking lot for the church.

The structure was jacked up while the cut sandstones were removed to the new location across the road. The building was let down onto large logs and slowly rolled across the road and set down on the new foundation. As the school became a residence, the front door of the school became back door of the house. It is now the home of Mrs. Margaret Freshwater.



Three Freshwater brothers came from England to Virginia at an early date. The name has been established in Brooke County for many generations. Those of school age attended local schools including Tent, Eldersville with N.R. Criss as teacher, and Hickory Hollow, near Paris. Several of the family within today's memory lived into their nineties. Two brothers, Wilbur, who purchased Tent School and later made it his home, lived to nearly 104 years of age.

Oscar, who operated the first gas station on Eldersville Road, was a few weeks over the century mark when he passed away. Both died within the past fifteen years.

Wilbur enjoyed reminiscing on his days at Hickory Hollow School, when Margaret Jane Moore was the teacher. He recalled that she smoked a clay pipe and raised her own tobacco.

Wilbur and Oscar's mother was Margaret Magdalene Wells, of the well-known Wells family that lived across the pasture field.



MARGARET JANE MOORE

Pictures courtesy
Margaret Freshwater



"Working on the roads" was a chore that was left up to the farmers who used them. A Public Road Department was unheard of until the last few decades.

Shown here are William "Billy" Miller and David "Dave" Clark as they tackle the job on Amspoker Ridge, off Tent Church Road, the "mud" road that ran past both of their farms. The year is unknown.

Billy Miller's home was on the Steen farm, while the Clark home was originally the Robert Cassidy farm.

The Steen family was prominent in Brooke County as well as in its neighboring Jefferson Township in Pennsylvania. James Steen was born in Ireland around 1750, and later served in the Revolution. His trip across the mountains into Brooke County resembled that of Richard "Graybeard" Wells. Two of his children had been placed in a knapsack and thrown across the saddle of the horse, with only their heads visible through a slit in the middle. The mother rode this horse, carrying the baby on her lap. James walked, leading the pack horse that carried all of the family's earthly possessions. He became one of the founders of Tent Church. Both are buried here.



LEFT

East of the Tent Church Road stood this stone house until demolished a few years ago by coal strippers. It was last known as the Graf family home and prior to that as the Brady house.

It was built by Thomas C. Wheeler in 1837. The stone was cut from a rock quarry in the hollow behind the house.

Graf bought the farm from Brady in 1926. The barn was built during the Civil War and was paid for by one year's clipping of wool.



This magnificent house on the "Wells Farm" is owned by the Hamilton family. Its present occupant, John Hamilton, recalls with nostalgia the beauty of the farm in former days. Row upon row of apple trees and evergreens crowded the fields, and pink roses climbed the fence for several hundred feet along the Eldersville Road.

The house was built in the early part of this century. A tenant house also remains today, it having been at one time the "big house."

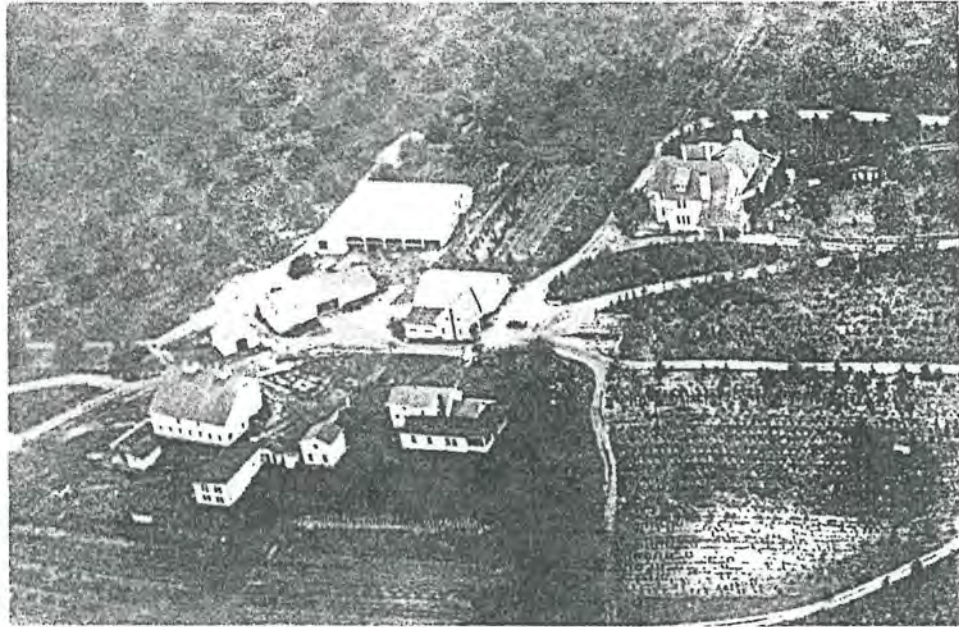
Richard "Gray Beard" Wells settled the farm in 1772, about the time Alexander Wells arrived in what later became Avella, Pennsylvania. After establishing his claim, Richard returned to Baltimore and brought back a party of men with tools and utensils for working the farm.

His first task was to build a fort of white oak

logs for protection from Indians. Because of his kindness to the red men, his fort was never attacked.

Richard frequently made trips back east, where in 1776 he married Edith Coale. Believing it too dangerous to bring his wife into the wilderness, he left her at home and spent the winters there with her, returning to the farm in the spring.

Edith died in 1783, leaving two little ones, Jesse, born in 1779 and Jemima, born the following year. After his wife's death, Richard brought them across the mountains to the fort in two baskets, tied with ropes to the handles and swung over the horse. The baskets were well cushioned and lined with sufficient blankets for comfort. Here at the fort, with the aid of a servant and housekeeper, "Gray Beard" Wells raised his children.



An Airplane View of the Wells Farm, Located on the George Washington Trail, Five Miles East of Follansbee, Brooke County, West Virginia.



John Hamilton, a direct descendant of Richard "Gray Beard" Wells, stands within the stone enclosure surrounding the vault in which are buried some of his ancestors. The private graveyard remains silent and serene beneath tall, sheltering white pines on a remote area of the Wells Farm in Brooke County, West Virginia. John's father, also John Hamilton, is a son of the late Helen Wells Hamilton, who was a daughter of Herbert (Bert) Wells. The latter, along with historian, the late Elza Scott, initiated the Pioneer Picnics in 1938, held by the Tri State Historical Society on an annual basis for a number of years.



Winter Scene of Burial Ground and Vault
of Richard "Graybeard" Wells. About 1920.



Two sons of Robert Cassidy, John Robert and William Bramwell,
in the front yard of the old Cassidy Homestead.

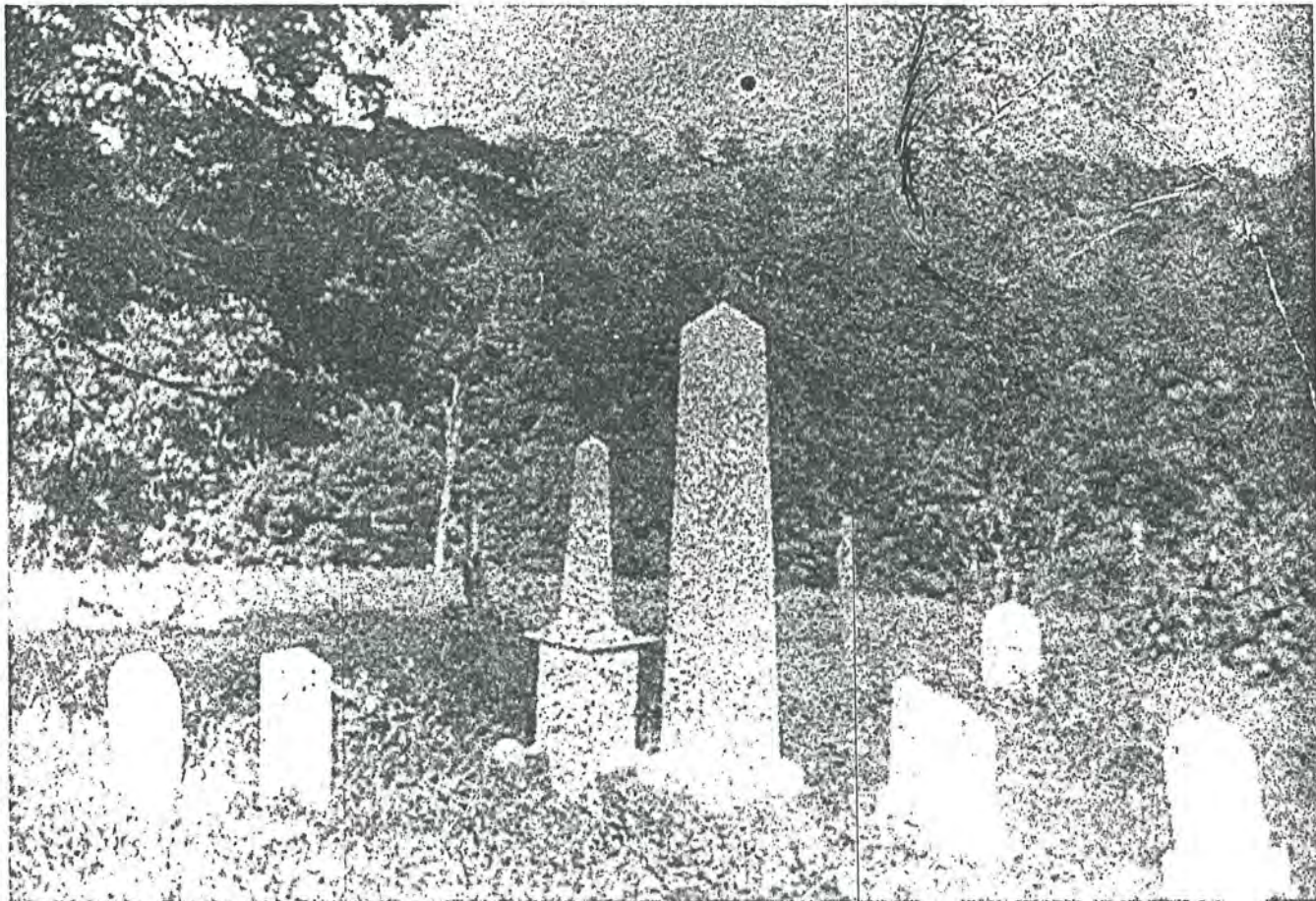


A class of students at Good Will School
 Picture courtesy Ruby Greathouse

KEY TO MAP OF BROOKE COUNTY, VIRGINIA, 1852

(See last page of booklet)

A	Amspoker, George	N	Elson, Alexander	AA	Strain, Ebenezer
B	Amspoker, John heirs	O	Freshwater, Reuben	BB	Thorley, Samuel heirs
C	Baxter, William	P	Freshwater, William	CC	Wells, Greybeard's heirs
D	Baxter, George	Q	Hayes, Enoch	DD	Wiggins, John, SR.
E	Baxter, Richard	R	Headington, John	EE	Wiggins, John, JR.
F	Cariens, Sarah	S	Hendricks, John heirs	FF	Williamson, James
G	Cariens, Mary's heirs	T	Headington, Mrs. Elizabeth	GG	Williamson, Samuel
H	Carter, Joseph	U	Hindman, William	HH	Wheeler, Thomas C. heirs
I	Carter, Lewis	V	Hindman, Samuel		
J	Carter, Samuel	W	Latimore, Brown		
K	Cassidy, Robert heirs	X	McCleary, Ewing		
L	Donovan, Thomas	Y	Murchland, James heirs		
M	Elson, John	Z	Patterson, James		



The old Murchland family cemetery was once respected and accepted as a hallowed spot on the Parkinson Boles farm, set aside for the burial of the family's dead. Thorns, brush and trees have since become entangled with the fallen stones, nearly obliterating any semblance of a grave yard. Due to coal strippers in the area, highwalls and water-filled gullies surround it on three sides, leaving access from only one direction.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are indebted to all who in any way contributed to the success of this tour, and to those who helped to supply pictures and information for this booklet.

Thanks to the Kevin Felton family for their hospitality, and to speakers, John Hamilton, Eric Haught, and Eva Belle Catlett.

Thanks to Ruth Craft and Jane Mester for their special efforts and to Linda Haught and all who helped to prepare the food.

Booklet by Kathryn Campbell Slasor and June Campbell Grossman.



