

## INTRODUCTION TO MT. BETHEL CEMETERY

When the Scots-Irish Covenanters arrived in the place that would become the village of Greeneville, most brought few things with them. What they did bring was their religion. The first Presbyterian Church in Greeneville was established in 1780 and was named Mt. Bethel. Quoting from the book Greeneville One Hundred Year Portrait 1775-1875, by Richard Harrison Doughty, page 99:

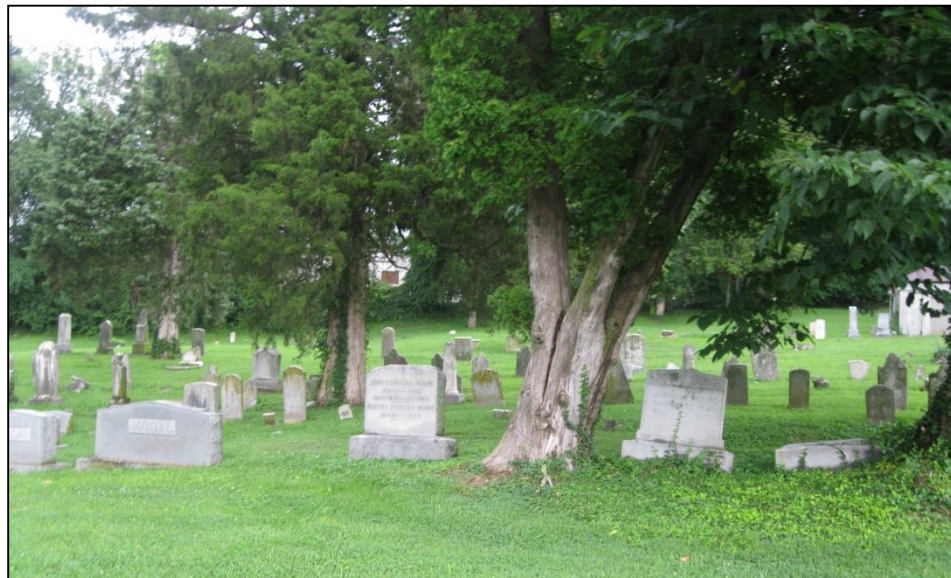
“On November 27, 1792, James Galbreath deeded three acres and four poles of land near the head of Richland Creek, for ten dollars, to Anthony Moore, Alexander Galbreath, Major Temple, John Reese, John Carson, Nicholas Hays, Thomas Russell, David Robinson, William McGill, and Jeremiah Smith, elders of Mount Bethel Church.”



The Mt. Bethel Cemetery has been recognized by the Greene County Heritage Trust as one of the most important historic sites in Greeneville, and as such, has been marked with an official Heritage Trust sign.

As discussed in Mr. Doughty's book, the original congregation separated over Church doctrine in 1798. One faction remained in Town and took the name of Harmony Church; thus, the earliest graveyard in Greeneville is known as Old Harmony. The other faction moved their Church one mile east of Town sometime before 1815. This Church retained the original name of Mt. Bethel. A deed from Valentine Sevier to the Mt. Bethel Congregation for three acres of land was signed on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1815, and the "meeting house" was already there.

I am told the Mt. Bethel Congregation was active at this location until about the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century when the Church building was dismantled. Exactly when Congregation members began to be interred in the Mt. Bethel Cemetery is not known; however, the oldest tombstone, still readable, is dated July 13, 1820. This is the grave of Margaret Copeland Moore, Row 6, Grave 22, who was the wife of Anthony Moore, one of the Church Elders in 1792. There are probably earlier burials.



Interred in this historic and holy ground are known to be:

The Grantor of the land for the original Mt. Bethel Church in 1792  
James Galbreath, died May 15, 1830 "age 72 years", Row 10, Grave 21

#### Pioneer Ministers

Reverend Samuel Witherspoon Doak, born March 24, 1785, died February 3, 1864 "... died in the 56<sup>th</sup> year of his ministry", Row 4, Grave 7. He is also well known as a co-founder, along with his father, Samuel Doak, of Tusculum Academy, now Tusculum College, which continues to educate our young people.

Reverend Isaac S. Bonham, born August 18, 1810; died May 4, 1849, Row 13, Grave 1 (original tombstone found at this location). He has been called the Father of Cumberland Presbyterianism in Greene County, and he founded a number of Churches that remain active.

### Two Revolutionary War soldiers

Anthony Moore, born 1732, died November 18, 1822, Row 6, Grave 21  
William Ross, died April 27, 1834 “age about 92 years”, Row 8, Grave 15

Anthony Moore was one of the original Church Elders in 1792. It is said he was the father of the first white child to be born in Greene County.

### Six War of 1812 Soldiers

John E. McGaughey, born July 12, 1792, died May 20, 1874, Row 10, Grave 34  
John Moore Senior, born November 9, 1795, died September 29, 1869, Row 6, Grave 35  
David Rice, born September 1773, died December 7, 1864, Row 11, Grave 20  
John W. Robinson, born October 22, 1792, died November 12, 1852,  
Row 14, Grave 6 [Mausoleum]  
William Ross II, born August 14, 1790, died September 13, 1865, Row 8, Grave 20  
John W. Wilson, died December 31, 1840 “age 47”, Row 5, Grave 15

### Twelve Civil War Soldiers

John Aiken, 1<sup>st</sup> TN Artillery, Company E, Row 12, Grave 13  
William Ambrose, 3<sup>rd</sup> TN Mounted Infantry, Company A, Row 18, Grave 5  
Edward W. Burroughs, 2<sup>nd</sup> FL Cavalry, Co D, CSA, Row 7, Grave 27  
William C. Chapman, 8<sup>th</sup> TN Cavalry, Company B, Row 5, Grave 39  
George Lenord Colyer, 8<sup>th</sup> TN Cavalry, Company C, Row 13, Grave 10  
Captain David Fry, 2<sup>nd</sup> TN Infantry, Company F, Row 18, Grave 6  
Washington Luner Fulks, 13<sup>th</sup> TN Infantry, Company C, Row 11, Grave 22  
William Henry Johnson, 1<sup>st</sup> TN Cavalry, Company I, Row 8, Grave 2  
John R. Lowe, 8<sup>th</sup> TN Cavalry, Company D, Row 3, Grave 10  
Charles A. Rankin, 12<sup>th</sup> TN Days Cavalry, CSA, Row 10, Grave 38  
James Thomas, 1<sup>st</sup> TN Cavalry, Company M, Row 18, Grave 4  
William F. Willis, 1<sup>st</sup> TN Cavalry, Company I, Row 8, Grave 13

Captain David Fry was the organizer of the “Lick Creek Bridge Burners”, whose story has been researched and published by Mr. Donahue Bible.

African-Americans were also buried in the Mt. Bethel cemetery. We know of four members of the Manuel Family who are buried here. There are surely more.

Recent burials include Richard Carl Travis (1933-2006), Row 17, Grave 9, a veteran of the Korean War and Dr. Robert Robinson Orr who died in 2016. Dr. Orr was a noted Historian and Scholar of Greene County History and a direct descendant of Anthony Moore, one of the original Founders of historic Mt. Bethel.

Thus it can be said, while not the oldest burial ground in Greeneville - Old Harmony Graveyard holds that special distinction - Mt. Bethel Cemetery is the oldest cemetery *in continual use* in Greeneville.



In 2015, a Whispers from the Grave Tour was sponsored by the Greene County Heritage Trust to commemorate this Historical Burial Ground.



The Historic Mount Bethel Cemetery Association would welcome your support for the cemetery maintenance and upkeep, including tombstone repairs, of this piece of Greene County history. Contributions may be made to Mount Bethel Cemetery Association, c/o George Collins, 50 Smokey View Drive, Greeneville, Tennessee 37745.