

St. John's Turns 180 – May 9, 1844

CONGRATULATIONS! St. John's Cathedral has reached a milestone! And to commemorate the occasion, here's a brief look at our founding and the birth of the first Episcopal Church in East Tennessee. Give thanks and celebrate our **180th BIRTHDAY!**

In 1826, a small congregation of dedicated participants was organized by Rev. John Davis, a missionary priest from Pennsylvania, and began holding local worship services in downtown Knoxville. Growth was slow and difficult, and a permanent Episcopal Church looked doubtful. The small fledgling group continued their efforts despite periods of inactivity and only occasional visits from missionary clergy. Their devotion was rewarded when St. John's Church was established as a mission in 1829 and was one of four congregations represented at the Primary Convention when the Diocese of Tennessee was organized in Nashville that year. St. John's membership gradually grew to twenty-five, and on May 9, 1844, eleven determined members and friends assembled "*...for the purpose of forming and establishing a church in which the worship of God shall be conducted according to the faith and discipline of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America and have for that purpose form a congregation at Knoxville, now at this date worshipping in said town.*" The calling and dreams of that small group were fulfilled, and Articles of Association were drafted and unanimously approved at the close of the meeting. A vestry was elected, and St. John's Church became a reality. True to their East Tennessee heritage, those dedicated individuals persevered and defied the odds, and St. John's will always be indebted to them. Those present were listed in the Vestry minutes: T.W. Humes, Albert M. Lea, John H. Crozier, Samuel Mansfield, Francis A. Ramsey, Hugh A.M. White, William B. French, Hugh L. McClung, James Williams, Samuel Bell, and Andrew R. Humes, Sr. Warden. These founders were some of Knoxville's most prominent and influential citizens, firmly dedicated to their Church and to their City. As St. John's took its place in the Knoxville community, the city was only 52 years old, with a population of approximately 1,500.

Less than a month later, in June 1844, St. John's became known as St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church when it attained parish status and was the first church in East Tennessee to be admitted to the Diocese of Tennessee.

On June 25, 1844, the Vestry voted to purchase and fit up a house for a place of worship, and services were first conducted in a dwelling-house owned by Col. W. H. Sneed on Church Street. Gatherings later were moved to a small building at the northwest corner of Gay and Church Streets, which was donated without charge for that purpose by Andrew R. Humes, brother of the future Rev. Thomas Humes. This building was neatly appointed as a chapel and was used for about two years. It is generally recognized that Thomas Humes, then a candidate for orders in the Diocese, began to serve as lay reader on Sunday mornings and was the force behind the founding of St. John's Church.

Rev. Humes later offered insight into the birth of St. John's:

"The hearts of the little flock in that infant period of its life were knit together in brotherly love and had a large measure of peace and joy. Among its members there followed, in consequence, an utter ignoring of all disagreeable distinctions, worldly in their nature and growing out of social positions or means of temporal living. The friendly and even cordial coalescence in fraternal feeling manifested itself in manner, to the exclusion of that personal or family isolation which sometimes obtains in older and prosperous churches, and is as detrimental to their spiritual growth as it is repellant to strangers. In a word, it was a very happy little flock, resting upon and rejoicing in the promises of God in Christ."

It is important to recognize from those first humble beginnings, the aspirations, attitude, spirit, and devotion of its members became the building blocks and guiding principles of St. John's Church. The "friendly, cordial, and fraternal feeling" which was manifested in that original group has been nurtured through years and continues to this day.

HAPPY 180TH BIRTHDAY TO ST. JOHN'S!

From its founding, St. John's Parish has been one of the leading organizations in the religious and civic life of Knoxville. The following individuals assembled on May 9, 1844, for the stated purpose of establishing an Episcopal Church in Knoxville. Articles of Association were drafted and approved, and a Vestry was elected. These founders were some of Knoxville's most prominent and influential citizens, dedicated to their Church and to their City.

Albert M. Lea – b. 1808 Richland, TN; graduate West Point; Engr/Surveyor/cartographer; U.S Army Engineer; Chief Engineer State of Tennessee; E. TN University Instructor; first City Engineer for Knoxville; Joined Confederate Army as engineering officer; First Communicant of St. John's Episcopal Church; m. Ellen Shoemaker.

Tennessee Encyclopedia, Tennessee Historical Society, James X. Corgan, 2018

Thomas W. Humes – b. Knoxville 1815; Alderman; Rector of St. John's (1846 – 1861, 1863 – 1869); Trustee East Tennessee University; President of East Tennessee University (University of Tennessee) 1865 – 1883; Editor of Knoxville Times, Knoxville Register, and The Whig Watch Tower; Librarian Lawson-McGhee Library of Knoxville; m. Cornelia Williams.

John H. Crozier – b. Knoxville, TN 1812; Attorney; State Representative; US Representative; Knox Co. attorney general; Alderman; father immigrated from Ireland and became one of Knoxville' earliest settlers; Crozier house corner of Gay & Clinch was occupied by Gen Burnside during Union occupation. Crozier Street named for him (now Central Avenue); established E. TN Historical Society 1834. Trustee East Tennessee University; m. Mary Williams; Brother-in Law of Cornelia Williams Humes.

East Tennessee Historical Society, Lucile Deaderick (ed.), *Heart of the Valley: A History of Knoxville, Tennessee* (Knoxville, Tenn.: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1976

Samuel Mansfield – b. Maryland 1821; moved to Knoxville 1838, started wholesale drug company; resigned Vestry 1846 to relocate business in Memphis; Retired to Los Angeles where he was vestryman of Christ Church. m. Mary B. Robertson of Fayette Co. TN.

Goodspeeds' History of Tennessee, County Histories

Francis (Frank) A. Ramsey – b. Knox Co. 1821; Alderman; Physician; Medical Director Confederate Army; Half-brother of Rev. Thomas Humes; Son of Col. Francis A. Ramsey, who built Ramsey House and was one of first settlers of Knoxville; m. Anna Maria Breck.

Find a Grave 114799373; "Biographical register of physicians who served the Confederacy," U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

Hugh Alexander McNutt White –b. Knox Co 1802; Alderman; m Elizabeth Humes, sister of Rev. Thomas Humes; Grandson of James White; Brother of George McNutt White, 19th mayor of Knoxville; former Elder in Presbyterian Church; Trustee East Tennessee University.

Find-a-Grave 48119738, Ancestry - Humes Family tree

William Baxter French – b. 1812 Rhea Co. TN; Alderman; employed by Cowan, McClung and Co.; m. Isabella Lawson White, granddaughter of James White and daughter of Hugh L. White (U.S. Senator & presidential candidate 1836); m. Margaret Elizabeth (Lizzie) Crozier, women's suffragist and daughter of John H. Crozier.

CHATTANOOGA FREE PRESS, 30 Mar 1997, PIONEER FAMILIES, 3 French-Family Nephews Fell In The Battle of Chickamauga (by John Wilson).

Hugh L. McClung Sr. – b. Knoxville 1810; Alderman; Grandson of James White; Son of Margaret White McClung; surveyor and civil engineer; Trustee East Tennessee University; Trustee East Tennessee Female Institute; Clerk U.S. District Court. m. Rachel Trigg Morgan and Anna Gillespie.

Find-a Grave 32721708, Genealogy Trails History Group – Knox Co. Biographies of University Trustees.

James Williams – b. 1796 Grainger County; Alderman; Founder & editor Knoxville Post; Tennessee state representative; Founded Deaf and Dumb Asylum of Knoxville; moved to Chattanooga and started riverboat company with brother; appointed Ambassador to Turkey in 1858 by President Buchanan; Remained in Europe after the Civil War; Accused of treason for joining the Confederate cause as a US Government employee and as a Confederate propagandist and selling Confederate bonds to British families; Pardoned by President Andrew Johnson; m. Lucy Jane Graham of Claiborne County. who was raised in “Castle Rock,” the Graham family estate in Tazewell, TN. Castle Rock was purchased and dismantled in 1950’s by Dr. Frank Rogers and reconstructed in Knoxville Lakemore Hills as Speedwell Manor. Ginny Rogers of St. John’s Episcopal Cathedral was Dr. Rogers’ wife.

Graham Family Memoirs, “Biographical Dictionary of the Confederacy” 1977, World Biographical Encyclopedia, Inc

Andrew R. Humes – b. 1817 Knoxville; Sr. Warden; Brother of Rev. Thomas Humes; Brother-in-law of Hugh. A. M. White; Banking Commissioner; Planter in Monroe Co. TN. m. Margaret White McGhee, great-granddaughter of James White.

Ancestry, Humes Family Tree, Find-a-Grave 73615655; Notable Southern Families, Zella Armstrong, 2015.

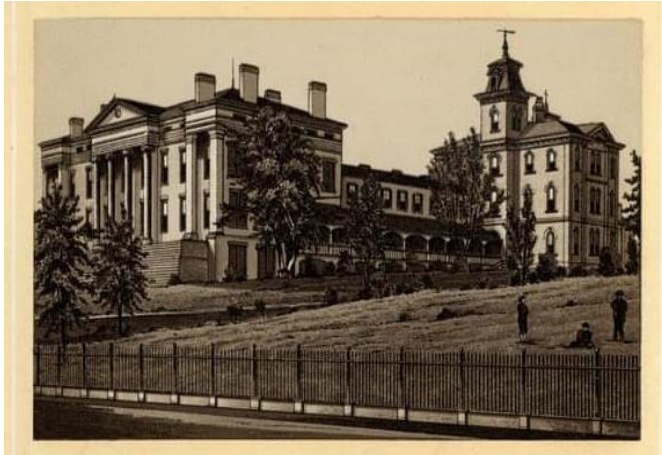
Samuel Bell - b. Washington County, Pennsylvania 1798; Moved to Knoxville in 1820; Alderman; 13th & 16th mayor of Knoxville 1840-1841, 1844-1845; renowned silversmith, sword, and knife maker; jeweler; Moved and retired to San Antonio. m. Elizabeth Carr.

The Mayors of Knoxville, Jack Neely and Paul James. 2019; *Bladesmith's Forum*; “Knoxville’s Makers,” *Visit Knoxville*, 2023.

St. John's Turns 180

What Was Happening in Knoxville in 1844?

1844 TENNESSEE SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF



Tennessee School for the Deaf was established in 1844 (eighth school for the deaf in America). Reverend Thomas MacIntire, a teacher from the Ohio Institute of Education of the Deaf and Dumb, was called to Knoxville to take charge of the new school.

The new Board leased a house from G.W. Churchwell in east Knoxville, and the school opened in 1845 with 6 students.

In June 1846, Calvin Morgan of Knoxville gave the school two acres of land just west of the center of town (Asylum Avenue now Summit Hill Drive).

Money was secured to erect the first building (later known as the East Wing). In Spring of 1848, construction began on Main Building which was completed in 1851.

1844 KNOXVILLE MAYOR

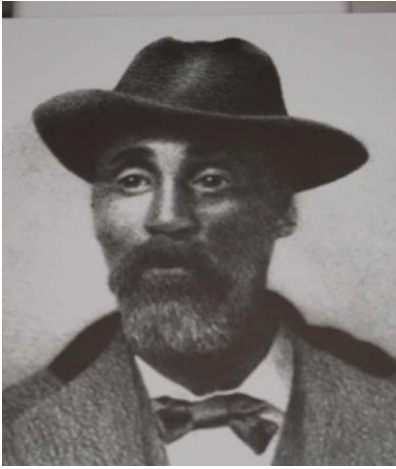


SAMUEL BELL.
Mayor, 1840-'41, and 1844-'45.

One of Founders of St. John's Church, Samuel Bell, was elected to his second term as Mayor of Knoxville in 1844.

Born in Washington County, Pennsylvania; renowned silversmith; jeweler; at age 14 worked in arms factory making swords for use in War of 1812; made a pair of silver spurs for Gen. Sam Houston who wore them at the battle of San Jacinto; famed for his Sheffield and Bowie knives and sterling silver service; served on Board of Alderman; also served as Mayor 1840-41; moved to San Antonio where he lived until his death in 1882.

1844 CAL JOHNSON BORN



Caldonia “Cal” Fackler Johnson was born a slave on Oct. 14, 1844, in Knoxville’s Farragut Hotel. Both of Cal Johnson’s parents were born slaves, belonging to the McClung family at Campbell Station.

Freed from slavery at the age of 21, Cal Johnson started out on the bottom rung of Knoxville’s economic ladder. He was awarded a federal contract to take on the grisly task of digging up the bodies of Civil War soldiers who had been buried in temporary graves. He reburied them in the national cemetery or in private cemeteries.

Johnson used the money he earned from these re-interments to open a racetrack and saloons in downtown Knoxville. Now known as Speedway Circle, the oval stretch of asphalt and surrounding houses in Burlington was once the site of a Cal Johnson racetrack. Along with his mother and brother, he also

began purchasing real estate and businesses, acquiring acres of land along State Street and constructing the Cal Johnson Building. He hosted the first airplane landing in East Tennessee history, and later, he was landlord to one of Knoxville’s first automobile dealerships.

Johnson’s rise from slavery to build a fortune as a self-made entrepreneur, business leader, and philanthropist is one of Knoxville’s most remarkable success stories. At the time of his death in 1925, he was one of the wealthiest men in Tennessee.

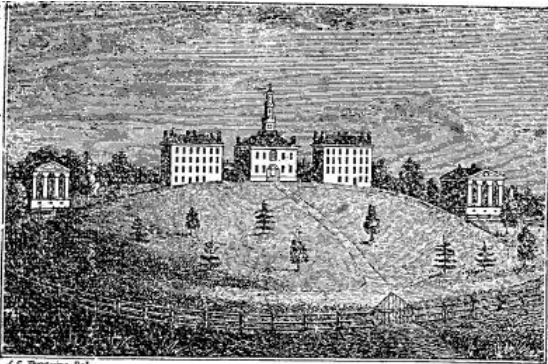
1844 JAMES K. POLK ELECTED PRESIDENT



Originally from North Carolina, the Polk family moved to Columbia, Tennessee in 1803. James Polk was known as “Napoleon of the Stump” because of his oratory style. He served as a state representative for Maury County (1823-25), as U.S. Congressman (1825-39). From 1835 until he left the Congress to become Governor of Tennessee (1839), Polk served as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and played a critical role in the conflict over slavery by using the gag rule to prevent any petition related to abolition of slavery from reaching the floor.

He became the Democratic nominee on the 9th ballot at the 1844 Democratic Convention in Baltimore. The Democratic platform called for strict construction of the U.S. Constitution, opposition to federally funded canals, roads, and other improvements, condemned federal interference in how states handled slavery, and called for “reoccupation of Oregon and the re-annexation of Texas.” Polk narrowly defeated Henry Clay of Kentucky in the presidential election.

EAST TENNESSEE UNIVERSITY IN 1844



EAST TENNESSEE UNIVERSITY.

Joseph Estabrook served as University President from 1834 to 1850. Called “Old Joe” by the students. He relaxed discipline, employed scholarly professors for the faculty, and oversaw an aggressive building program. Courses of instruction became more organized, catalogs were published for the first time, an alumni association was formed, and the first literary societies were established. During Estabrook's presidency, enrollment increased from 95 to 169.

Estabrook's resignation in 1850 was prompted ultimately by a bitter sectarian debate among Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. (He was a seminarian at Princeton

Presbyterian Theological Seminary). Although no sectarian doctrines were taught at the University in the 1840s, some of the trustees were concerned that two of the five faculty members were Presbyterian ministers. One critic claimed that since there were more Methodists in the student body than all other denominations combined, the faculty should reflect the same sectarian ratio. In disgust, Estabrook tendered his resignation.

In 1844, Board of Trustees included: Hugh L. McClung, Hugh Alexander McNutt White, John H. Crozier, and Thomas W. Humes, all founding members of St. John's Church.

Faculty included Albert Miller Lea, St. John's founding member and first communicant.

Previous Graduates included: John H. Crozier, Andrew R. Humes, Thomas Humes, and Frank A. Ramsey, all founding members of St. John's Church.

Cost of Attending University in 1844

Tuition, in advance	\$15.00 per Session
Contingent Expenses	\$1.00 per Session
Library Fee (paid by those who draw books)	\$0.50 per Session
Boarding, in private families, \$1.50 per week	\$30.75 per Session
Washing, fuel and lights, estimated at	<u>\$8.00 per Session</u>
Total	\$55.25

1844 SWISS IN EAST TENNESSEE

In 1844, the East Tennessee Colonization Company was founded by George Gerding, a German land speculator, who promoted, secured investors, and purchased 170,000 acres of land in Morgan, Cumberland, Fentress, and Scott Counties in an effort to attract German and Swiss settlers to the area. Conflicts over the price and accessibility of land, the lack of development, and religious disputes caused a decline in the settlements. Many of the immigrants were professionals and relocated to Knoxville, soon to become an important part of life in East Tennessee. During the next sixty-five years more than seventy-five German and Swiss families settled in the Knoxville area. Important Knoxville businesses started by those new residents include Buffat Mill, Sterchi Brothers Furniture Stores, Chavannes Lumber Company, Gouffon Transfer Company, Schaad Lumber Company, A. J. Metler Hauling and Rigging, Babelay Greenhouses, Staub Opera House, and Rochat Realty Company.