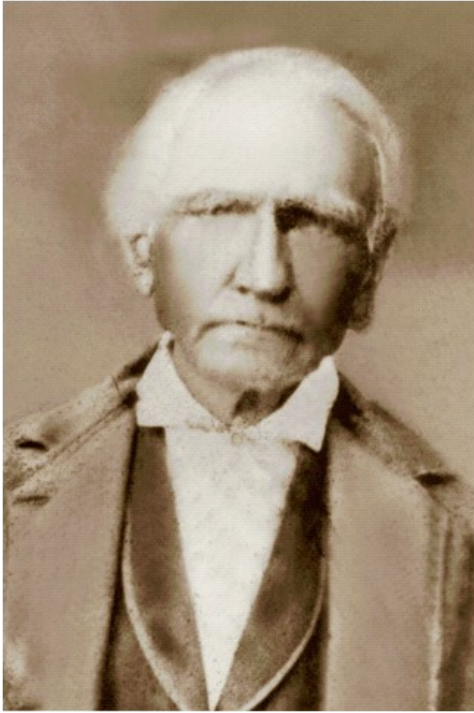


The Beersheba Browns

The Browns have been in Beersheba since before John Armfield ever saw it. The closest common ancestor of them all is **Absolom Brown** (c. 1778 - after 1860), who settled in the Collins River valley sometime before 1809, for he carved his name with that date into the wall of Hubbard's Cave on the side of Brown Mountain, which was named for him. (Brown Mountain is on the south side of Hills Creek Road, which turns off to the east of Highway 56 in Irving College.)

Absolom and his wife Mary Green both came from South Carolina. They had five children, of

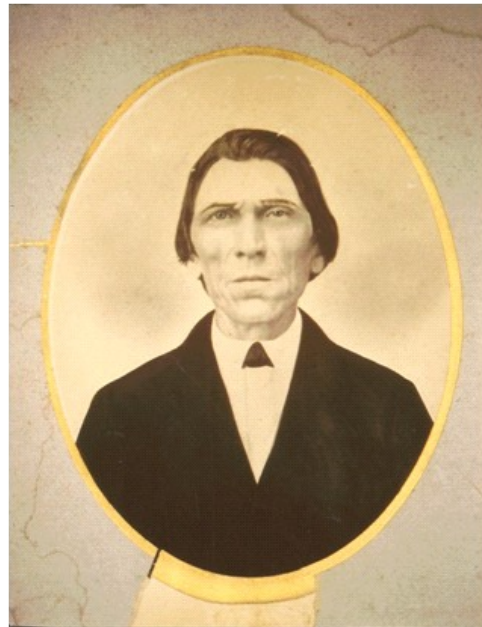


Absolom Brown

whom only the second, Thomas, had descendants in Beersheba. Absolom's name first appears in the Warren County tax list in 1812 when he purchased for \$305 a 200-acre tract on the Collins River. In 1814, he served with the Tennessee Militia under Andrew Jackson at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, which ended the Creek Indian war. His company, commanded by Capt. Tait, does not seem to have been directly involved in the fighting. He served as minister at the nearby Shiloh Methodist Church (established 1809) and was Warren County Turnpike

Commissioner in 1822, 1826 and 1829. Mary died at an undetermined date after 1811. Absolom's second wife's name was Joyce, who was, according to family tradition, a much younger sister of Mary, Joyce's first child was William Sanford Brown (1820 - 1898), and it is from him that most of the Beersheba Browns descend. Absolom died in 1868, just before his 90th birthday.

Luther Brown, grandson of Absolom's second son, Thomas, moved to Beersheba from Tracy City early in the 20th century. Luther is described here in the loving memoir "Poppy Brown" by his granddaughter Reba Brown Norris. Luther's remarkable



William Sanford Brown

son Gordon, astronomer, surveyor, and musician, is remembered in Clopper Almon's account.

Most of the Beersheba Browns, however, are descendants of **William Sanford Brown** (1820 - 1898), Absolom's first son by his second wife. To him Absolom gave 400 acres that included much of what is now called the Backbone. About half way down the Backbone there is a wide bench on the east side and an excellent spring. There William Sanford Brown and his bride, Nancy Dykes Brown, built their house, presumably about the time of their marriage in 1839. It was a simple one-room log cabin with a large

fireplace and a loft above for sleeping.



Cabin of William Sanford and Nancy Dykes Brown. Handwriting across the top says "Halfway down the Backbone".

Brown became the first Methodist circuit rider in northern Grundy County. Every Sunday, he would ride his horse down the mountain, across the valley and up the mountain on the other side to minister to the Barkertown settlement, a round trip of about eighteen miles. He always carried his gun and usually brought back enough game to keep his family in meat for a week. If he made a kill on his way to the service, he had to bring the animal into the church to keep the dogs from eating it. Thomas Black of McMinnville, who owned one of the Beersheba summer cottages, said of Brown, "If there was ever a man inspired by God, he must have been. I have heard him preach and not once have I ever heard him make a grammatical error, although I'm sure he has very little education."



Nancy Dykes Brown in front of the cabin "halfway down the backbone."

His granddaughter Ida Brown Parson remembered her childhood visits to "Bill" and Nancy in their cabin home and how they sat by the fire, wrapped in "Indian" blankets and both smoking pipes. "Bill" continued his ministry until his death at age 79; Nancy then went to live nearby with their son William Almond Brown until her death in 1908.

Three of the sons of William Sanford and Nancy Dykes Brown stayed in the Beersheba area: William Almond Brown (1847 - 1926); Norris Brown (1849 - 1941); and Leander Virgil Brown (1861 -1940). William Almond Brown lived on what is now John Richardson Road, near its intersection with Hwy 56. He had a orchard with peaches and apples that survived into living memory but is now gone. Also on his property was Babbling Spring, the origin of Gross Cove, which is still flowing. His second child, John, lived on Blackberry Road, married Hattie Walker, and had a daughter, Vivian, who married James B. Smartt and had five children covered under the Smartt family. The family of William Almond's fifth child, Eddie Brown, is recounted by Jean Garrett below. William Almond's sixth child, Bishop Marvin Brown, owned and ran the store in Beersheba; his granddaughter, Charlotte Brown Boyd, recalls that family's life in her contribution. She mentions cousins Wayland and Joe Brown who ran the store for several years, They were sons of A. S. (Gus) Brown, who was the son of Norris Brown, William Almond's younger brother. Norris's daughter Ida was the source of the vivid memory of Bill and Nancy wrapped in blankets and sitting by the fire.

Finally, **Leander Virgil Brown**, (1861 - 1940), youngest son of William Sanford, took no chances on how he would be remembered. In the last year of his life, he wrote a letter to "posterity" which reads in part as follows.

I, Virgil Brown. was born on 13th of May 1861 the year the southern and federal war begun, and in Grundy Co., Tennessee on the Cumberland Mountain where the owls hoot and the wild cats scream. Turkeys, deer and black bear was chased by good fast running dogs, hounds and cur dogs. Over fifty years ago there was hundreds of wild animals in this mountainous country. We camped out sometimes under large rocks at night. We hunted and used single and double barrel shot guns well loaded we measured the powder and the shot and had our guns well loaded.

I shot and killed four deer at one shot and shot

and killed four bear at three shots. I climbed up a small black gum bush from a bear that took after me and at another time I had to run from a large bear and climb a tree. Well, I climbed down because the bear soon died under the tree. Well, the number of bear I have killed was (all in a day) four. The number of deer fifty and the number of wild turkeys was fifty and the number of grey foxes caught and killed was 108. The number of rattle snakes killed 250. I skinned 75 rattle snakes and dressed the hides for men and women's belts.



Virgil Brown

Virgil married Malvina Cornelison in 1883, and they had seven children. He was a farmer and a lay-preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.: He was first licensed as an "Exhorter" in 1897. Not much is known about his ministry except an anecdote told by his granddaughter, Margaret Brown Cop-pinger. Shortly before the Methodist Union in 1939, the bishop of the Tennessee Conference came to Grace Chapel in Beersheba Springs to urge the congregation to vote for the proposed union between the

ME Church, South, the ME Church, North and the Methodist Protestant Church. At the conclusion of the bishop's remarks, Virgil stood up and responded, "I don't want to join with those northerner Methodists!"

Virgil concluded his letter to posterity with these words:

*Virgil Brown is my name
And I am in America's Nation
And Heaven is my Expectation.
And when this you see, remember me
When I am in my grave, and all my bones are
rotten
These few lines might tell my name when I am
quite forgotten.*

He was long remembered for his love of flowers and singing. His sonorous voice could be heard as he walked from his log cabin on the "Backbone" to sell bouquets of colorful blossoms to the "summer people."

Virgil and Malvina had seven children; The first two had particular significance for Beersheba. The el-



Henry Lee Brown

dest was Nancy Agnes; her story is told in the following account of the Brown-Bean house. The second child was Henry.

Henry Lee Brown (1885 - 1959) was born in Tarlton in the valley below Beersheba.. As a young man he learned the building trade and established a successful contracting business in Beersheba,, building many homes, schools and churches. He married Anna Medley of Warren County in 1909.

After their marriage, Henry and Anna moved to Chattanooga where Henry built a home in the Red Bank community. The family, however, returned to Beersheba each summer to escape the heat. Annie would take the children to the mountain by train, while Henry walked and led the milk cow up the old stage road through Savage Gulf to Beersheba. He carried food on the cow's back and camped out at night. In 1916 their son, Henry Lee, Jr., referred to by the family as "Little Son," died in Chattanooga during a diphtheria epidemic.

Henry built many buildings on the mountain including the Palmer Methodist Church in 1920, the Palmer School in 1927, the Beersheba Springs Library and Coalmont Methodist Church. He also built the Coalmont School with his own money, but the county never paid him for it because of the Depression. That blow broke him and he never recovered financially. As a result, the home in Chattanooga had to be sold and the family returned to the mountain. Afterwards, he built a number of homes for the Seventh Day Adventists, and came under the influence of their religion, and devoted much of his time to their causes.

Annie and the children refused to accept Henry's new religion and remained loyal to the Methodist Church. Henry eventually left his family. Later, he built a large, two-story home at Beersheba for Annie, but, she would not accept it, choosing instead to live in the modest home she had inherited from her mother. Years later, Henry's children joked that they all enjoyed ham and bacon too much to become Adventists. Surely, this humorous explanation was a way of dealing with what must have been an extremely painful situation.

Henry's oldest granddaughter, Sylvia Brown Flowers, remembers him this way, "Strangely I don't

have a large number of personal memories of Henry (we always called him Grand-Daddy), except that he almost always wore a suit coat, tie and hat. Sometimes he gave us a piece of candy - always a treat. He and my Dad [Carlos] often argued about religious doctrines, but, their attitude toward each other seemed to soften somewhat during Henry's older years."

Henry Brown died in March of 1959 and is buried at Fall Creek Cemetery in Palmer, Tennessee. Anna Medley Brown died September 25, 1974 and was buried near her mother (Malvina "Viney" Medley Brown) and Henry's mother (Malvina "Mallie" Cornelison Brown) at Grace Chapel Methodist Church in Beersheba Springs.

Henry and Anna had three children who reached maturity: (1) Margaret, who married Floyd Coppinger, (2) Carlos, and (3) James Fate (Jamie). Without Margaret, it is safe to say, the Historical Society would not exist, nor would the museum, nor would this book. Her life and contributions are described in the accompanying box. Carlos's daughter Sylvia Brown Flowers, lives in Macon, Georgia but has taken up the torch of her aunt Margaret and researched the Brown family, created a valuable Internet site about the family, and played a leading role in organizing the annual Brown family reunion. Another daughter of Carlos, Norma Brown Sparks, is a nurse practitioner and lives on Hege St. in the heart of Beersheba. The story of Jamie Brown, third child of Anna and Henry, is told in the section below on the Brown-Bean house.

Compiled by Clopper Almon
Based on and including material from:
Margaret Brown Coppinger
Sylvia Brown Flowers
James David Juliano.

Recollections of Luther Brown

My grandparents, Luther and Laura Smith Brown, lived in a log house in the part of Beersheba known as the Panhandle. They had not always lived there; their oldest children had been born while they were living near Tracy City. I do not know when they came to Beersheba, nor do I know anything more than the barest genealogical outline connecting Luther with Absolom, Luther's father was named Absolom, and

his father was Thomas, second son of the original Absolom in the Collins valley. Luther's full name was William Luther Brown, but he never used the William. For me, he was my Poppy; and of course I assumed they had lived right there since time began. My parents, Paul and Zelma Brown lived about a mile away; Paul was the sixth of the seven children of Luther and Laura. .

I remember looking forward to my Poppy's stopping at our house for a visit almost every morning as he took his daily walk to Claude Coppinger's post office and store. Poppy always walked with homemade cane or walking stick, as he called it. He was losing his eyesight and became totally blind before his death. He was well-known in the community and everyone called him "Uncle Luther." He loved to talk with everyone. Especially, he liked to talk about "the Lord," and often got into debates about various Christian doctrines. In earlier days, he had been a traveling preacher going to surrounding communities and holding revival meetings.

In 1933, he held a revival in Cagle, and his son Paul went along. Paul was 28 and quite the eligible bachelor with several lady friends in Beersheba and Tarlton, I've been told. But when he met the dark-eyed 15-year-old beauty Zelma Bonner, he was totally smitten! They were married December 23 of that year. They lived with Poppy and Mommy until they could buy five or six acres and build their own home in the Panhandle, where I was born in 1938.

I have fond memories of large family gatherings on Sunday afternoons at my grandparents' home. Most of their seven children and their offspring would be there, and often family friends as well. I was an only child until I was nine, so having cousins to play with was a treat.

Sometime in the early 1940's, Poppy gave a portion of his land for a small Nazarene church to be built. By this time, his eyesight was so poor that he could no longer read his beloved Bible or see the words to his favorite hymns. I can still see him clearly in my mind's eye, sitting on the podium in this little church. He knew all the hymns by heart and would

sing enthusiastically from memory. I never hear "How Firm a Foundation" without thinking of him! I cannot remember hearing him preach a sermon, but he would always be called upon to pray at the services.

Richard (Red) King was the minister at this church, and Charlie Green preached there too. Poppy loved these two men as though they were his sons. Red King was a caregiver for Poppy during his last illness, and Poppy willed his home to him. Poppy died April 3, 1943. The King family moved in soon after Poppy's death, and Mommy came to live with us until her house could be built. Paul soon built her a little house beside ours, and she was very proud and pleased to have her own little house.

Before his death, Poppy had asked me to drop some wild flowers on his coffin as it was lowered into the earth, and I had promised that I would. He was buried at Fall Creek cemetery in the Laager community. I was so scared and shy, but I told my father what I had promised -- but there were no wild flowers. Daddy pulled some flowers from a spray and gave them to me; and, just as they were about to shovel in the dirt, I ran up and dropped the flowers on his coffin. Being only a child, I had never seen anyone do this and thought it was something very unusual. I was so scared! The scene is still vivid in my mind after all these years.

Luther and Laura were married for 56 years; she survived him by 17 years. All of his 7 children and 13 grandchildren survived him, and one more grandchild, my brother Mark, was born after his death. I have felt especially blessed to have known my grandparents in my early, formative years. They were wonderful, godly people and gave me worth examples to follow.

Reba Brown Norris

Gordon Brown, Surveyor, Astronomer, Musician

Gordon Brown (1882 - 1968), eldest son of Luther and Laura Brown, was born while the family was living in Tracy City. When finished the fifth grade and had just learned, in his words, "to count U.S. money," he had to drop out of school and go to work in the coal mines to help support the family. He worked there 25 years. During those years, he would save up his money for a trip to Chattanooga, where he would scour the bookstores, especially the used book

stores, for books on mathematics, astronomy, and surveying. From them, he taught himself multiplication, long division, fractions, algebra, geometry, and, especially, trigonometry. He got a manual of surveying and taught himself how to do it. Finally, he was able to take and pass the surveyor's examination and set himself up in business.

At this point, about 1920, he moved to Beersheba and built himself a simple house at the far end of what

we then called the Old Road to Laurel, now called Faherty Lane, that roughly parallels Stone Door Road, then called the New Road to Laurel. Now, however, Faherty essentially stops where Marcus Hill Road branches off to the left. In those days it continued straight another 0.7 miles to join Stone Door Road just before the descent into the Laurel Creek gorge. There, on the west side of the road about 200 feet before the junction, Gordon built his house and nailed to a neat, clearly lettered sign, "Gordon Brown, Licensed Surveyor".

He was not wanting for business. The lumbermen needed to know where their property lines were, and Gordon could show them. All across the mountain tops and down into the gulfs where the big trees were, Gordon ran his lines. Within a few years, nobody knew the backwoods around Beersheba better than Gordon. The Great Depression, however, hit the home building industry hard, and with it the lumber business. Gordon took work with the WPA project that built a wagon road down the mountain from the end of the Grassy Ridge Road to join the stage road in the valley. Thirty years earlier, it would have been very useful road; but Tennessee 56 had already been built in the 1920's, and this road was a pure make-work project. Too narrow and too steep for normal automobiles, it is nevertheless a beautiful construction with much dry stone masonry, perhaps the last mountain road built with only human and mule strength. Years later, Gordon would point it out with pride. It would be a splendid part of the trail system in the Savage Gulf State Natural Area, but suggestions to include it have been ignored. World War II revived the economy and Gordon was soon busy surveying.

Surveying, along with an abundant garden, provided Gordon's livelihood, but his great passion was astronomy. Star charts decorated the walls of his house. From the peak of his roof, he ran a wire to a peg some 50 feet due south of the peak. His porch was also on the south side of the house and to the porch roof he attached, precisely below the peak of the house roof, one end of a stick with a piece of metal with a slit at the other end. The stick could be rotated down so that the slit was just at eye level for Gordon as he sat on the edge of the porch. He could then watch a star through the slit. When it crossed the wire, the star would disappear for a few seconds, and Gordon would know that it had just crossed his meridian. From his ephemeris, he knew exactly at what time this would happen, and so he could set his

watch. In essence, he had created for himself out of simple materials a meridian circle, which he had read about in his astronomy books. When I first knew him, about 1950, we had electricity and a radio at Nanhaven; Gordon had neither, so he would charge me to set my watch by the radio. I would do so and walk out to see Gordon. If it was dark, he would go through this procedure and tell me the time exact to a few seconds. If the sun was shining, he would instead turn to the equatorial sundial which he had made from the iron rim of a wagon wheel and a few rods. It was less accurate because the sun, unlike the star, is not a point source of light, but he would still be right to within one or two minutes.

Gordon taught me the different types of time: apparent solar time, mean solar time, standard time, and sidereal time, which he pronounced as side-real time. I came back and explained all these to my father, who asked me how to spell side-real time. The next day I asked Gordon and reported home; my father suggested that when I explained it to anyone else I should say sy-dee-re-al, but to say side-real with Gordon. I then realized that Gordon was so completely self-taught that he had never heard the word pronounced by anyone else.

Walks with Gordon were an education in local history, but they were also physically demanding. I and my friends were about 17 at the time and in good physical condition, Gordon was nearly 70 and suffering from emphysema. On a road, we had to slow down a bit for him, but on the mountain side he traveled twice as fast we could. He would go off and leave us headed up the mountain. We would struggle on with rocks turning under our feet and eventually find Gordon sitting quietly waiting for us. The rocks never turned under his feet. He knew where all the springs were and pointed out the foundations of long-gone cabins. I remember one walk where we went to the bench on the Backbone where the William Sanford Brown's cabin had been. Gordon pointed out the apple trees and the abundant spring, which had been, of course, the reason for putting the house precisely there.

After I was in college, I offered to give Gordon a calculus text. He politely declined because he was devoting his spare time to music. He had taught himself to play the violin some years earlier and was presently working on the viola. One summer I came with a friend who brought along a cornet, and I had a baritone horn with me. We would go out to Gordon's, and

he would get out a hymnal and by lamp light we would send hymns floating across the mountain top and down the Laurel gorge. Gordon had a good ear and played in tune, at least as far as I could tell, but the rhythms were of his own devising. We learned just to follow along, because there was no forcing Gordon into the conventions of four-four time. I heard him play one evening for a revival held at Grace Chapel. The pianist had learned well the irregularities of Gordon's tempo, and all went well.

Gordon lived another 12 years after I finished college and embarked on a professional career 'up

North' with limited time for Beersheba. I did not see him during those years. When I went back a few years ago looking for the house, I could find no trace of it. On my bookshelf, however, is a treasured volume, Charles Young's *Lessons in Astronomy* (Ginn, Boston 1891) given me by Gordon, who knew everything in it. When I open it and put my nose between its pages, I am suddenly back in the cabin of perhaps the greatest geniuses I have known. Had he had but half a chance, Gordon Brown would have been among the leading scientists of his day.

Clopper Almon

Memories of the Marvin Brown Family



As a boy, my grandfather Marvin Brown worked for the Northcutt Store in Altamont and later for the Northcutt store in Beersheba, across from the hotel. He was married to Timmie Emma Smith of Beersheba. My grandparents lived in Ten Pen for awhile before moving to the present day Brown Cottage.

Eventually Marvin was able to purchase the Northcutt's store in Beersheba and later moved it to the present site of the Beersheba Springs Market. The house which they purchased next to the store had been owned by Fred Schwoon, Jr. and was sold to settle the estate of his sister, Lena Schwoon Woodlee. The house was built in 1899 by Fred Schwoon for his daughter Clara Schwoon Woodlee as her wedding present. The builder is not known, but Mr. Schwoon was a timber man who came to Grundy County to cut trees in Savage Gulf. The house has solid framing of yellow poplar and heart pine floors. My father, Dennis Brown, and his two brothers, Raymond and Stanley were raised in this house. Their maternal grandfather, "Pa Smith" lived in a log house behind the present day house that had also belonged to the Schwoon family.

The store, named B.M. Brown and Sons, sold just about everything anyone might need, for transportation elsewhere was difficult. I never knew my grandfather Marvin, but was told by many who did that he especially loved to see the new babies when they were brought into the store. Among the many services the store provided, a portable dental chair was stored in our attic which had been used in the store when the visiting dentist came to Beersheba to care for the local children's teeth. The chair is now in the Beersheba Museum.

The Great Depression was a difficult time for Beersheba and the store was closed for a year during this period. The Brown sons were away in school (Raymond at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Dennis in boarding school in Athens, Tennessee, as the Grundy County High School had burned). Only Stanley remained in Beersheba at the Elementary School. Marvin had let most of the groceries out on credit to the local customers who then could find little or no work. During this time the Brown family went to El Paso, Texas to operate a hotel. Eventually they were able to return and reopen the store. In 1933 Marvin became ill and Dennis came home to run the store. Dennis had been working in Chattanooga at the time. After Marvin's death, Dennis bought out his brothers. Stanley married Dorothy Beck of Oklahoma and ran a garage and later a road paving business. They had one son, Gary Lynn. All are deceased. Two grandsons Gary Don and Kevin live in Altamont.. Raymond lived in Chattanooga and married Lois Nation. They later moved to Miami. They had no children and are both deceased. All of the family is

buried at Grace Cemetery.

Dennis began to date Frances Hughes of Irving College; they arranged meetings via notes carried back and forth by the ice delivery man from McMinnville. Frances's mother, Charlotte Hughes, died from pneumonia when Frances was seven. She and her father lived both on a farm at Irving College and in McMinnville, where he had a car dealership. When she graduated from high school in McMinnville in 1934, she was voted most beautiful and most popular in her senior class. Her older sisters went on the UT Knoxville and graduated and eventually received masters degrees from Peabody and Tulane. Frances didn't want to go to college but always said she just needed to take care of her dad. I suspect money had become an issue in this depression time. She and her father did a lot of things to hang on to the farm, things like running a boarding house for the workers building a bridge in the area. They also spent a year working in Miami after she finished high school and then came back to Tennessee.

Frances and Dennis were married in 1939. Frances came to live at Beersheba and helped operate the store. I was born in 1946, and Mother soon went back to work in the store.



Frances and Dennis Brown

My daughter Emily's words at Frances's funeral in 2008 say much about her life. "My grandmother's mission in life was to prepare great food and share it with everyone. I accompanied her, as did my mother (Charlotte), on many deliveries to homes that didn't look or smell like my home. Grandmother was always carrying hot food and caring words to the people forgotten by the community. Mother and I think her nurturing of others began at an early age

with caring for her father and continued throughout her life. She taught us to feel comfortable around all kinds of people from all walks of life." My mother loved Beersheba, and Beersheba loved her.

My grandmother Brown had remarried a Methodist minister, Rev. S.A. Hopper, and they lived in East Tennessee but maintained a summer home, the Hopper Cottage, at Beersheba.

My memories of growing up next to the store are of a place that was the hub of Beersheba's social activity. Maggie Argo was my nanny while my parents worked. The store was not then self-service. Late in the afternoon, I was allowed to come to the store and stay until closing time. Daddy taught me to make change at the cash register before I started school, and I stood on soft drink crates in order to reach the counter. Christmas was an exciting time at the store. A live tree was placed in the window, surrounded by artificial snow on which toys were displayed. Customers were allowed to put toys "back" for their children (a precursor to "layaway plans"). The store also sold appliances and ours was the first household in Beersheba to own a television. My mother popped popcorn for this occasion, as everyone was invited to come and watch.

Having the only telephone in the late 1940s made the store a communication center for Beersheba families. I remember Western Union calling with sad news for a local family. Daddy gathered a box of

groceries and headed to the family's home with the news that the husband had died. The phone in our home was used at night to call a doctor to come from McMinnville to see the sick. If the mountain was icy, Daddy would drive the old WWII ambulance with 4-wheel drive to the foot of the mountain and bring the doctor up to see the patient.. The large warming stove was also a gathering place to visit and wait for the mail to arrive.

In 1951 my grandfather Hughes, widowed since my mother was seven years old, had a severe stroke. He came to live with us on the mountain, and Daddy took over the operation of the farm in the valley. Daddy loved the farm and soon decided to build a house and move to the Irving College community, my mother's home. Mother didn't want to go because she loved Beersheba and the store. Waylon Brown, a cousin, and his wife operated the store, and we moved at Thanksgiving when I was seven. My parents continued to care for my grandfather and operated the farm. Daddy had been able to get enough subscribers to get electricity to Beersheba in the early 1940's just before the war. He was later was able to do the same for the rural telephone cooperative. Phone service and electricity did much to modernize the communities of Beersheba and Irving College. Even though we lived at Irving College, we returned to Beersheba each summer because my parents were the managers of the Methodist Assembly for seventeen years.



Brown Cottage 2008

In October of 1957 we received a phone call in the middle of the night. By this time we were living in Irving College, but the news from Beersheba was that the McGee House, the Anna and James Brown house and the store were on fire. As we drove through the valley the view from Tarlton looked as if the whole mountain was aglow. We had to leave the car and walk through Alf Adams field in order to get past the fire trucks from McMinnville and Tracy City. Faye Hill was standing in a chenille bathrobe, wetting down the roof of our cottage with a garden hose because of the intense heat from the blaze. My grandmother, who lived in the cottage at the time, had been awakened by Glenn Killian, who saw the fire as he drove his truck home. Together they were able to awaken James and Anna Brown, but at the time it was not known that Mr. McGee was not at home when the fire started. It was assumed that he perished until the next day. The community had gathered and were rescuing any contents they could carry to the lawn next door, but the building was a total loss. News of the fire made the Nashville and Chattanooga papers. At first, my father did not plan to rebuild the store.

But local as well as summer patrons urged him to do so, and the next summer the store was re-opened as a self-service store with shopping carts. My parents continued to own the store, but it was managed first by Waylon Brown and later his brother Joe Brown until it was sold in 1979 to Mitchell Hobbs, who later sold it Bud Whitman.

I grew up, attended college, and married Robert Boyd of McMinnville at Beersheba just after we graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1968. He became an attorney; and I, a school teacher. We returned to McMinnville and have two children, Emily Haston of McMinnville and Robert Boyd III of Knoxville. Three granddaughters Lucy McGill, and Emma Kathleen Haston and Sarah Morgan Boyd are the highlight of our retirement years -- along with returning to Beersheba each spring when the dogwood and the mountain laurel begin to bloom. My parents instilled in me a love and respect for my mountain heritage, and I feel privileged to have been able to maintain our family home as a place to come to and enjoy the mountains.

Charlotte Brown Boyd

The Eddie Brown Log House



This house of sawn log construction stands on the north side of Highway 56, about one tenth of a mile east of Grace Chapel. Thomas Cagle, son of Canova Cagle and grandson of Ben Cagle, with his

wife Gertrude, made a verbal agreement with Henry C. Merritt and wife Maude Merritt to buy 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres of land for \$40.00 on October 10, 1902. This land came from the original tract sold in 1868 by William and

Harriet Rogers to the Schofters, who in turn had sold the tract to Henry Merritt for \$350.

It seems that Tom Cagle, before receiving a deed, had built the house on the 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ acre tract. Later he had an urge to go west as several others around Beersheba were doing at the time. He first went to Oklahoma, where he got in contact with Asa Morton, who had left the valley earlier. Eventually, Tom Cagle ended up in Kimberly, Idaho, and sent for his family. (Thomas and Gertrude Cagle had three children, one of whom was Toby Cagle, inventor of the Cagle brake, which is used now on racing cars and aircraft. He was vice-president of Airheart Products, Inc., of Long Beach, California, the manufacturers of the Cagle Automatic Self-Adjusting Brake.)

On October 30, 1905 a deed was signed jointly by Henry and Maude Merritt and Thomas and Gertrude Cagle to J. C. Smith for \$300, which stipulated that Thomas Cagle was to be paid for building the house. J. C. Smith lived in this house from 1905 until November 18, 1911, when he and his wife, Editha Smith, sold it to his son, Frank Smith, and son-in-law, B. Marvin Brown, for \$600.

On October 4, 1913, Frank Smith and wife sold their interest to T. B. Northcutt. For the next few years the house was rented, usually to the Henry L. Brown family, who lived there during the summer and went to Chattanooga for the winters until 1916 when they returned to Beersheba to live after surviving the flooding of the Tennessee River and a smallpox epidemic

in Chattanooga. In 1918 the Ernest J. Hege property, consisting of three houses, became available and the Henry L. Brown family moved there.

Soon thereafter, in 1921, the home of Eddie Brown across the highway from the house Tom Cagle had built burned, and Eddie, a brother of B. Marvin Brown, bought the log house and lived there the rest of his life. Eddie was a superintendent in the coal mines and farmed. He was commended by the governor of Tennessee for his good farming practices. He also served as a Justice of the Peace and did a number of marriages, some on the front porch. He and his wife Emma Sweeton Brown had five children living at the time their deaths. Emma died in 1945 and Eddie in 1946. The five children inherited the house; and the eldest son, Douglas F. Brown, acquired the interest of the others. Douglas lived in Chicago and worked in the Chicago post office for many years. In Chicago he met and married Rose Ippolito. They moved to Tinley park, a suburb of Chicago, where Rose was elected mayor in 1949. The house at Beersheba was their summer home. Upon retirement, they returned to Tennessee, first to Nashville and later to McMinnville. Douglas died in 1985, survived by Rose and five children. In 2008, the house remained the property of Rose and was used by the children and grandchildren during the summers.

Margaret Brown Coppinger
Jean Hodge Garrett

Sue Campbell's Place



Across Highway 56 from the Eddie Brown Log House is the farmhouse built in 1932 by Sue Sweeton Argo Campbell, sister of Emma Sweeton Brown, wife of Eddie Brown. Eddie and Emma had purchased the property in two tracts in 1906 from Frank and Emma Brown Gross and I. S. Brown. There was a house on the property at the site of the present house. My mother (Ethel Brown Hodge, daughter of Eddie and Emma Brown) and her younger siblings were born in that original house. It burned in 1921. As mentioned above, Eddie and Emma then acquired the house on the other side of the highway. In 1932, Emma's sister, Sue Sweeton Argo Campbell, asked Eddie and Emma if she might buy the land where the burned house had stood. Her first husband had been an Argo; after his death, she married a Campbell. He died in 1932 leaving her with a seven-year-old son, James Clifford Campbell (known as Clifford). Eddie and Emma agreed and sold her the property for \$1. She built a small, three-room house with a front and back porch. I was told that Sue paid Henry Brown, a cousin on the Brown side, \$300 to build the house. By 1940, the original back porch was closed in to make a small kitchen with a large, black, wood-burning cook stove, an eating area, and a small pantry where Aunt Sue stored her flour and other baking items. In the eating area stood an old wooden container where she kept clabber milk for baking her delicious biscuits. Her

clabber was somewhat similar to our plain yogurt today. (Because of this memory, I sometimes make my biscuits or pancakes with yogurt.) Later the kitchen, eating area and pantry were expanded. Electricity came to the mountain in 1941. Water came much later in 1964, and when it did, Aunt Sue's son James put a bathroom in the pantry room, but Aunt Sue herself still preferred the outhouse. She said that the tub wasn't good for anything except drying apples. She left the house to Clifford, who added exterior stonework and siding.

Clifford died in 2006; after the will was probated, I purchased the house and six acres and began renovations. Except for some modern conveniences, I have restored the house as nearly as possible to its original appearance. I took off drywall that was over several layers of wallpaper that was over newspaper and magazines plastered to the wall; one of the newspapers was *The Agriculture Times*. Underneath, we found tongue-and-groove paneling with the boards running horizontally. Two doorways to the old kitchen (used before back porch was made into rooms) had been closed with strips of wood. Missing and not likely to return are the old smokehouse, the chicken house, the outhouse, the old fences that separated the garden and the one that kept Aunt Sue's cow and calves in the pasture. The blackberries along the back fence are missing, but

maybe I'll get them back. A cousin has a nursery on the property. Between my mother's my father's sides of the family, this property has now been in my family

for over 100 years.

Jean Hodge Garrett

The Brown-Bean House



On the east side of Backbone Road about a quarter mile north of Grace Chapel stands this modest house. It has, however, the double distinction of being, in its core, one of the oldest houses in Beersheba and of having been in the same family over 170 years. This core is a log cabin built about 1839 by William Sanford Brown (1820 - 1898), the youngest son of Absolom Brown, who settled in the Collins River Valley about 1809. The story of William Sanford (Bill) Brown has been told at the beginning of this section on the Brown family. Here we just recall that about 1839 he built a cabin on a bench halfway down the Backbone and lived there until his death in 1898. His widow, Nancy, then moved to live with her son William Almond Brown.

The youngest son of Bill and Nancy, Virgil (the huntsman) he had a daughter named Agnes who, as a young woman, worked in a doctor's office in Chat-

tanooga. James Madison Bean, a young Presbyterian clergyman planning to do missionary work in Africa after finishing a medical degree, was passing through Chattanooga on a train when he got a cinder in his eye. He realized that he needed medical help, got off the train, and went to a doctor. There he met Agnes, and all his plans changed. They were married in 1902 and went to Illinois, where over the course of years, he was pastor to several churches and served as chaplain to the Illinois legislature. But Agnes did not forget Beersheba. She and James built a summer house on the top of the Backbone at the site described above on land acquired from Agnes's father.

They wanted to be close to the Beersheba community, but they valued the logs and tradition of the old house down on the bench, so they brought the logs up one by one and reassembled them into the core of the new house. They added a front porch on the north

side and a kitchen on the back with its own porch to the east. By 1908, the front porch was extended to wrap around the house and join the kitchen porch. Later, the Beans decided to make the house their permanent residence and added a bedroom wing on the west side. By 1920, the house appeared essentially as it does now.



A photo from 1908 of the house seen from the west in its new location. The barn in the background at right is still standing. On the front, James Bean writes, "Our summer cottage." On the back, he writes "The porches are joined since this was taken."

The front step of the house is a large rock on which Agnes and her brother Henry used to stop to rest on their way from the Backbone to the school house when they were small children. (The school later burned and for years was known as the "old burned schoolhouse.") Uncle Bill Perry hauled the rock with his team of oxen and charged 25 cents.



The house, seen from the west, about 1920. The wing on the south side has been added, and it appears to have become the Bean's primary residence.

James F. Brown, son of Agnes's brother Henry,

had many memories of his Aunt Agnes, some going back to the 1920s.

They'd give me a nickel or something to bring the mail to them sometimes, and I'd come knock on the door and could hear Aunt Agnes coming through the house tippy-toein'. She's put her hands up to her face and peep out of the front window "'Who is it? Who is it?" she'd say. And I'd tell her, "It's me, Aunt Agnes. I've got your mail."

The house had seven outside doors, and she would tell me which one to come in. There was the front door and there were two side doors, one or two doors on the south side, one up in the bedroom, and on on the back porch. All of them went out onto big porches. When you'd come in there would be a path lined with newspapers, because if you got off and got onto her linoleum, you had a heap of trouble on your hands!

James Bean died in 1960, but Agnes continued to live there until her death in 1967. In 1969, the house was purchased by Agnes's nephew, James F. Brown (son of her brother Henry) and his wife Odessa..

James Fate Brown was born on a cold December day in 1919 in what was called the "Middle Hege House" in Beersheba Springs. He was the youngest of four children born to Henry and Anna Medley Brown. Henry's life has been described in the introduction to this section.



James Fate (Jamie) Brown

Young Jamie was a good student - he was bright and a hard worker. Consequently, he was accepted to college in Johnson City. It was a rare thing, indeed, for a mountain boy to be going to college during the Depression. Before finishing, however, James had to return to the mountain to help support his family during the hard times of the 1930's.

While in Johnson City, James met his first wife, Clera Baskin of Murfreesboro. They married in 1942, had one daughter, Carolyn Marie, and subsequently divorced a few years later. After this, James lived with his mother, Anna and sister, Margaret in the family home on State Highway 56 in Beersheba.

In 1957 a devastating fire swept through Beer-

sheba, destroying many buildings. The family home had been among those lost in the fire. After this, the people of Beersheba realized their need for a volunteer fire department. James convinced the city to purchase a fire engine and he and his brother, Carlos, went to Soddy Daisy to buy Beersheba's first fire engine.

In 1958, while on business in Chattanooga, James met a lovely young secretary, Odessa Morris, who was to become his wife, best friend and soul mate of 40 years. James and Odessa and their shop "Cumberland Supply" quickly became local landmarks in Beersheba Springs. The Browns' shop not only offered saddles, appliances and plumbing and electrical supplies to the community - a smile, a joke and a friendly conversation were always on offer too.

After retiring from business, James remained a vibrant and active focal point of the community from his home on the Backbone Road for many years. He and Odessa enjoyed their two grandsons and four

great-grandchildren. James also enjoyed horses, motorcycles and working in his leather shop. Belts and keychains made by him have found their way all over the United States. He was also a loyal and active member of Coalmont United Methodist Church and Sewanne Lodge F&AM. As age began to make horseback riding more challenging, James turned his interest to buggies. Hundreds of kids, young and old have spent untold hours of happiness riding in Mr. Jamie's buggies.

James Brown was known by all for his humor, wisdom, kindness and quiet generosity. He died in 2003, but Odessa still lives in the house. Their grandchildren and great grand children fill the home with laughter and happy memories.

James had one child, a daughter, Carolyn. Her sons, David and Warren Juliano, and their families help Odessa enjoy this house where their ancestors have lived, in the old location or the new, since 1839.