

HISTORY OF 511 GEORGIA AVENUE, CHATTANOOGA, TN

PART OF LOT 10 ORIGINAL TOWN

Downtown Chattanooga was, prior to 1835, known as Ross's Landing and occupied by the Indians. On December 29, 1835 the Treaty of New Echota was procured between the United States and the Indian Nation calling for their removal to the West and whites began settling in Ross's Landing. The Treaty of New Echota was approved by Congress on May 23, 1836. Troops were sent in to see to the removal of the Indians and arrived July 20, 1836. This removal of the Indians is now known as the Trail of Tears. Their property in Ross's Landing became the property of the State of Tennessee.

In 1836 the white settlers either built or took over from the Indians a log cabin and used it as a schoolhouse and public meeting hall. This cabin was located on what was to become Lot 10 Original Town Chattanooga. The log cabin was about 16x20 feet made of logs and chinked with mud with a fireplace at one end. It was located on the Georgia side of Lot 10. The seats were puncheon benches without backs. The floor was the bottom of an abandoned flatboat. A spice motor suspended from the outside of the stick and mud chimney served as a bell when struck with a pestle to call people together.

In June 1837 the settlers in Ross's Landing met in the log cabin schoolhouse and chose commissioners to represent them when the State opened the land. The Commissioners were Allen Kennedy, Albert S. Lenoir, John P. Long, Reynolds H. Ramsey, Aaron M. Rawlings and George W. Williams. The settlers conveyed their interest in the land to the Commissioners whose duty it was to enter the land, lay off the town into lots and make deeds to each occupant for the lot on which they resided. They also were to designate certain lots for the use of churches to be conveyed to the 1st congregation formed of each denomination. The balance of the lots were to be sold and the proceeds to be divided among the parties in interest.

On November 29, 1837 the State Legislature passed an Act creating the Ocoee Land District and established an entry taking office at Cleveland, Tennessee to dispose of the lands. The Act provided, among other things, that the land could be entered at seven dollars fifty cents per acre and that those in possession and residing on a piece of land should have a priority of entry for a three month period. There were 53 settlers who resided in what is now downtown Chattanooga at that time. The Commissioners entered the land containing 240 acres in two tracts or sections in the summer of 1838. Josiah Patty, of Roane County, laid off the city into lots. The Log Cabin schoolhouse was located on Lot 10, bounded by Georgia Avenue, 5th Street and Lookout Street.

Sometime between June 1 and August 11, 1838 the settlers in Ross's Landing met with the Commissioners in the Log Cabin to discuss formally naming the town. Captain John P. Long, one of the Commissioners, suggested the name Chattanooga, which after much discussion and consideration of other names including Montevideo and Lookout City, was adopted. The name of the Post Office was changed from Ross's Landing to Chattanooga on November 14, 1838.

In April 1839 the Commissioners held a sale of lots in Chattanooga and in December 1839 the Town of Chattanooga was incorporated by the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee. In January 1840 an election was held in the log schoolhouse naming seven aldermen who in turn chose one of their members, James Berry, to be Mayor. A new charter was issued to the "City of Chattanooga" in 1851.

On June 21, 1840, a group met in the Log cabin schoolhouse and organized the Presbyterian Church now known as First Presbyterian Church of Chattanooga. The Presbyterians soon built a church at Walnut and 3rd Streets.

In 1841 or 1842, Ten (10) Methodists gathered in the log cabin to organize the Church that is now known as First Centenary United Methodist Church. Their first minister was Reverend Thomas K. Munsey in the year 1843. They met in the community log cabin schoolhouse. A few years later, presumably due to growth, they met in the Presbyterian Church at 3rd and Walnut.

In 1847, all of the lots had been sold or conveyed by the Commissioners with the exception of Lot 10 on which to the community log cabin stood. On April 29, 1847 John P. Long, the last surviving original commissioner executed a deed for Lot 10 including the log cabin to Elijah Thurman, George D. Foster and Jonathan P. McMillin Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Chattanooga. The Methodists raised \$3,500.00 and built a frame, shingle roof building about 32x52 feet. The log cabin became the wood shed or out building. The new building was

known as the "Pepperbox Church" because of the square appearance of the belfry. The building was framed in Soddy and floated down river on a raft. It was painted white and was the best church in town at this time.

The Methodist Church continually occupied the Pepperbox Church until it was impounded by the Union troops in September 1863 during the Civil War and used as a hospital. When it was turned back over to the Church after the War the doors and windows were off and the floor broken in. It is speculated by this writer that much of this damage as well as destruction of the log cabin resulted from the severe shortage of wood for fuel during the siege and the denuding of Chattanooga of the trees and available wood.

Up until the Civil War blacks and whites worshipped together at the Methodist Church. Following the War the Church decided to build a new structure on property at Market and 8th Street. This property was later sold to D. B. Loveman and used as a department store.

On February 11, 1869 the Church conveyed Lot 10 and the Pepperbox Church to the Trustees of the newly formed black Methodist Episcopal Church Second, later known as Wiley Memorial United Methodist Church and now known as Bethlehem-Wiley Methodist Church. They worshipped in the Pepperbox Church until it was destroyed by fire in 1887. H. C. Jackson was contracted to build a new church building at the corner of 5th and Lookout Streets and west of the location of the Pepperbox Church building and log cabin. The cornerstone was laid in 1887 and the church completed by 1889. On July 26, 1889 the Church conveyed the eastern half of Lot 10, fronting on Georgia Avenue, to H. C. Jackson to complete payment for his services in constructing the new building.

Wiley Memorial Methodist Church has continuously occupied the Building at 5th and Lookout since its construction. In 1978 the building was in poor shape but money was raised and the building renovated.

On August 8, 1891 H. C. Jackson conveyed the East half of Lot 10 to W. K. Miller Trustee who in turn conveyed it on March 14, 1892 to James Gotschalk, who owned a furniture company for many years.

The present structure at 511 Georgia Avenue, Chattanooga was built about 1894. It is pictured in the History of the Chattanooga Fire Department published in 1897 and shown on the Sanborn-Perris Insurance Maps in 1904 but not 1889. It is also shown in the "Atlas of the City of Chattanooga, Tennessee" by G. M. Hopkins in 1904 but not 1889. It is shown as vacant (probably under construction) in the 1894 City Directory. The 1895 City Directory shows it occupied by John Rea, an architect and contractor and Miss Carlotta Rea who had a dance studio. Also a Frank Rea is shown as residing there.

The entire tract facing Georgia Avenue was partitioned into three parcels by deed March 18, 1901. S. B. Moe took title to the corner lot (503 Georgia Avenue) L. B. Wertheimer (an associate of James Gotschalk in his furniture business) took title to the middle lot (509 Georgia Avenue) and Julie Gotschalk and Henry Rose (also involved in the furniture business) took title to the building and lot at 511 Georgia Avenue. It appears from the City Directory that the two other lots were not improved until about 1907.

The Building at 511 Georgia Avenue was used for residential purposes until 1953. A series of people rented the property including F. M. Gardenhire who was the Customs Collector.

In 1920 Julie Gotschalk and Henry Rose sold 511 Georgia Ave. to A. C. Shawhan who was in the real estate management business. He sold the property to Cora Duffy in 1943. In 1950 the property was transferred to Gertude Smith Mackasey and then in 1951 to Frances Rose McGhee. She sold it to Allied Mortgage Company in 1953. Al Pendergrass, who owned Allied Mortgage told David P. Hawley that the property was a "Bawdy House" prior to that. In 1954 Allied Mortgage Company sold the Building to Ben Caldwell, a prominent attorney who maintained his office there until 1967 when he sold it to the firm of Keese, Stephenson and Cambron, Inc. Addison Webb bought the property in 1973 and in 1978 sold it to attorneys in the law firm of Luther, Anderson, et al.

In 1983 Maria Westman purchased the property and operated a gift shop at the premises until 1989 when it was sold to Richard and Linda Spencer. That same year it was sold to David P. Hawley and Ben O. Duggan who were attorneys and once again became a law office. The property presently belongs to David P. Hawley and wife Claire Hawley.