

PINTLALA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Next Meeting:
January 16th—2:30 p.m.
 Pintlala Baptist Church



*c/o Pintlala Public Library
 255 Federal Road
 Hope Hull, Alabama 36043*

Volume XXV, Number 1

www.pintlalahistoricalassociation.com

January 2011

On November 11, 2010, Gary Burton visited the gravesite of the Reverend Hope Hull. The Reverend Hull is buried in the family plot located in the Oconee Hill Cemetery. The historic cemetery is in the shadow of Sanford Stadium, University of Georgia, Athens.



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President's Message - Three New Resources for Local History are now Online

If you wish to learn more about the rich heritage of the Pintlala/Hope Hull area, you may find links to the following resources at www.pintlalahistoricalassociation.com.

- By special permission of the Montgomery County Historical Society, Major General Will Hill Tankersley's article, *Pintlala Warrior*, chronicling the life and military career of David Manac, is now posted on our website. Hard copies will be available at our meeting this month. The article is extremely well researched and written in a compelling style.

Archaeological Testing Along the Federal Road: A search for Samuel Moniac's Store, Montgomery County, Alabama is now available on the PHA website. The report prepared for Charles and David Murrell summarizes the findings at the Pintlala site when Dr. Gregory A. Waselkov, assisted by Dr. Craig Sheldon, Theresa Paglione, Paula Weiss, Tara Potts and student assistants from the University of South Alabama's Center for Archaeological Studies shovel tested the location of Moniac's Tavern on July 27, 2010. The report is enough to confirm for me the exact location of the historic site, although we may wish to have more substantive exploration done in the future. David and Charles Murrell have shared our strong interest in the project and have given permission to post this article.

- The PHA newsletter for October 2010 is available online. The first article dealing with the life and work of the Reverend Hope Hull is important to our local heritage.

Gary Burton, President
garyburton1@charter.net

January 2011 PHA Program

Pintlala Historical Association will meet on Sunday, January 16, 2011 at 2:30 in the Fellowship Hall of Pintlala Baptist Church. The program will be presented by Lee Anne Wofford from the Alabama Historical Commission. She has been with the Commission for over ten years and manages the Architectural Survey Program, the Alabama Register of Landmarks & Heritages, and the Historic Cemetery Program. She educates the public on the importance of documenting and preserving Alabama's historic buildings and cemeteries.

Please join us to learn of the activities of the Alabama Historical Commission.



Lee Anne Wofford

Welcome New Members

- Charles S. Reddoch, McDonough, Georgia
- Faye Hall Kennedy, Waverly Hall, Georgia
- Cherry Fowler, Ramer, Alabama
- Carolyn Keahey, Ramer, Alabama

DUES ARE DUE AT THE JANUARY MEETING. IF YOU CAN NOT ATTEND, PLEASE MAIL CHECK FOR \$15 TO INA SLADE, TREASURER. THIS WILL ENSURE THAT YOU DO NOT MISS ANY OF THE NEWSLETTERS! WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT. ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO JOIN, ESPECIALLY YOUNG PEOPLE! WE NEED TO EDUCATE A YOUNGER GENERATION ON THE HERITAGE OF PINTLALA AND SURROUNDING AREAS.

The Reverend Hope Hull: The Father of Methodism in Georgia

March 13, 1763—October 4, 1818

Part II
Gary P. Burton

Introductory Note

This article is the second of a two-part series. Part I, published in the October 2010 newsletter, dealt with the Reverend Hope Hull as a circuit rider and his role as the father of Methodism in Georgia.¹ This sequel presents Hull as an early trustee of the University of Georgia, his connection with Abner McGehee of Montgomery County, Alabama, and the emergence of Hope Hull as a community located near McGehee's central Alabama plantation.

Hull had earned quite a reputation as an intrepid circuit-riding preacher who was an effective church planter and propagated Methodism while traveling with Bishop Francis Asbury. From his early assignment in North Carolina to the time he "located," or settled down in one place, Wilkes County, Georgia, Hull contributed to the growth and expansion of Methodism more than any other man in the South.

Hull's reputation grew to be almost legendary as is evidenced by George G. Smith, Jr.'s 1877 description in *The History of Methodism in Georgia and Florida From 1785-1865*. Smith noted:

Hull was in all respects a great man. In person he had a large body and short limbs. He had a large, commanding head, a fine eye, and exceedingly bushy eyebrows. He was a man of quick decision and of great firmness. Like most great men, he possessed striking peculiarities, some of them relating to little things. One of these was to wear an old hat. *As old as Father Hull's hat* was a proverb in Northeast Georgia. His clothing was always too large for him, especially his boots. Once, the story goes, he complained of a pebble in his boot; when he drew it off, it had in it a small pair of candle-sniffers.

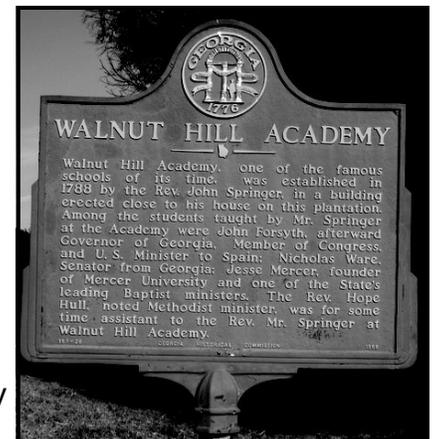
Establishing an Educational Institution in Wilkes County, Georgia

In 1788, Hull assisted the Reverend John Springer, a Presbyterian minister, with the Walnut Hill Academy in Walnut Hill, Georgia. Bishop Asbury and Hull led the Georgia Methodist Conference the following year to agree to open the state's first denominational school in Wilkes County. Bold plans were made to purchase 500 acres of land and to construct large buildings and build the Wesley and Whitfield School. The plans, however, never materialized. The undertaking proved to be too audacious for Hull and his friends.

A short time before Springer's death, Hull, moved the Walnut Hill Academy to southeast Wilkes County to land owned and donated by General David Meriwether. This land was about three miles from Washington, Georgia. The school was renamed Succoth Academy and became a well-respected center for classical education. Among



A North Carolina marker recalls ministry of Reverend Hope Hull.



Rev. Hull's involvement in the Walnut Hill Academy is noted on a marker in Wilkes County Georgia.

its notable students were John Forsyth, later a governor of Georgia, and Jesse Mercer, a leading Baptist minister and founder of Mercer University. According to William Sprague,

He (Hope Hull) had seen enough of the people to convince him that education was what they needed most, next to religion; and at a time when scarcely any one who was qualified, would submit to the drudgery of teaching; he commenced a school in Wilkes County, composed of pupils of both sexes, and all ages, from infancy to manhood; and then he divided his time between teaching and preaching.

While promoting education and preaching in and around Wilkes County and in response to public demand emanating from camp meetings and houses of worship, Hull prepared a compilation of songs and hymns. Because hymn books were expensive and difficult to obtain, both Hull and Jesse Mercer prepared manuals to assist in local gatherings. Hull's book, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, was published in Washington, Georgia in 1803 and came to be widely used by Methodists throughout Georgia. Mercer's hymn book, *Cluster of Sacred Songs*, first printed in Augusta, Georgia and later by a Philadelphia publisher, was even more successful.

Moving to Athens, Site of the New College

Located on the upper waters of the Oconee River, Athens, Georgia, began as a tiny settlement and had less than a dozen houses by 1803. The city eventually incorporated in 1806, but in the years before incorporation, plans were made to build a new state-supported college in the area. That college would become the University of Georgia. Originally named Franklin College after Benjamin Franklin, the college was established by an act of the General Assembly on January 27, 1785, making Georgia the first state to charter a state-supported university. At the first meeting of the new college's board of trustees, held in Augusta on February 13, 1786, Abraham Baldwin was selected president of the university.

When Hope Hull and his family moved from Wilkes County to Athens in 1803, the first building of the new college had not yet been completed. The Hull family took up residence a short distance from the village center, and the circuit-riding preacher built a church known as Hull's Meeting House near their home. Although not a classical scholar, Hull had worked with Succoth Academy in Wilkes



Washington, Georgia marker: Rev. Hull's early influence in Methodism is noted.



Hull, Georgia is a short distance from Athens and named for the Rev. Hope Hull.

County, and information about his educational con-

tributions preceded him to Athens. He quickly connected with the nascent work of the college and was invited to serve on the board of trustees. Determined that his sons would benefit from a broad and liberal education, Hull remained a trustee of the school until his death.

Once his service began as a trustee, Hull was quickly asked to serve on the Prudential Committee, which acted much like an executive committee. The one-time circuit-rider was entrusted with the details and operational minutiae of the young institution of learning and soon learned that institutional management had its share of headaches. Educational financing was especially problematic. For example, when the Georgia Legislature first agreed to support the school, the salaries of the officers and all other expenses came from rent collected from lands and real estate throughout Georgia. Renting out the lands and collecting that rent often rested disproportionately on the shoulders of Hull.

Hull's service for the university paralleled an active preaching ministry. He conducted Methodist meetings in local homes and then in a log cabin at what is now Five Points and became a founding influence that led to the formation of the First United Methodist Church of Athens.

Building the University of Georgia in the Early Years



Josiah Meigs

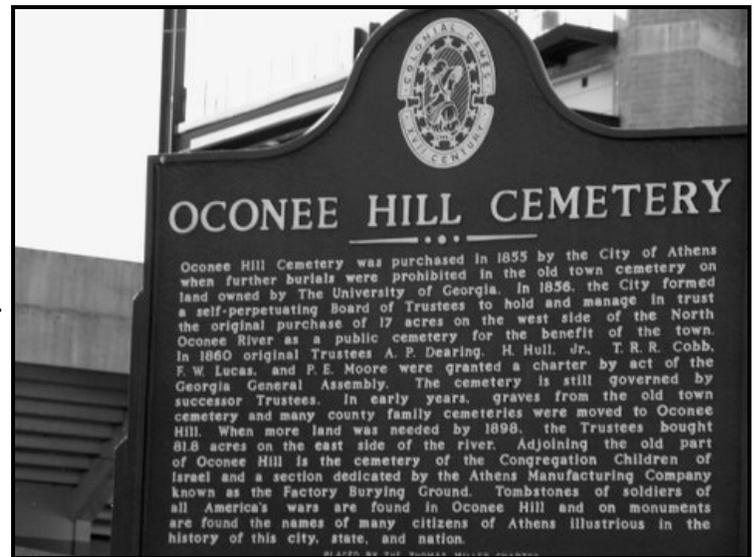
In 1801, two years before Hull's arrival in Athens, Josiah Meigs became the second president of the University of Georgia. He assumed the reigns of leadership when there were no buildings, text books, or libraries. Classes were conducted under the shade of large trees. The college's first commencement took place on May 31, 1804, with Hull offering the concluding prayer during the open-air exercises.

A.L. Hull, son of Hope Hull, in his 1894 *A Historical Sketch of the University of Georgia* included a note concerning two significant events that occurred in 1806: an application by the board and the absence of Hull. According to A. L. Hull, when the board convened on Sunday, July 6, 1806, at 8:00 a.m., board members made application to the state legislature for authority to establish a lottery to raise \$3,000 for the purchase of books. Lotteries were common in the period and thus the application is easily explained. Of the reverend's absence, A. L.

Hull stated, "I note with pleasure, that Hull was not present." The circuit-rider was probably out preaching. The note does point to probable tension among early leaders on the board, thus explaining the historian Hull's pleasure in Reverend Hull's absence.

Participating in Commencement Exercises and the Building of a Chapel

As referenced earlier in this article, Hull participated in the college's commencement in 1804. That practice was one that he continued in the following years. In 1807, a local newspaper,



The cemetery is within the shadow of Sanford Stadium, Athens, Georgia.

Monitor, had an announcement by President Meigs that on Monday, May 6, 1807, graduation exercises would take place for those receiving degrees. Also noted in the newspaper is that on the day prior to commencement Hull would deliver a sermon addressed to the candidates for degrees and the governor had been invited to attend. A few days later the newspaper printed a notice of postponement of the exercises, stating that Governor Irwin had summoned President Meigs to a meeting in order to ascertain the boundary between Georgia and North Carolina. The result of this summoning was that the public commencement and sermon were rescheduled for July 19 and 20.

A few weeks later, the August 8 edition of the *Monitor*, provided coverage of the commencement exercises:

COMMUNICATION. University of Georgia, ss. Athens, July 23d. 1807. PUBLIC COMMENCEMENT. On the 19th day of this month the Board of Trustees convened in the apparatus chamber, from whence they retired to attend a numerous assembly convened to hear a sermon addressed to the candidates for Degrees, by the Rev. Hope Hull. On Monday the 20th, at 10 o'clock A.M. a procession was formed at the north end of the avenue extending from the north part of the College thro' Front and Baldwin streets. The procession, conducted by Mr. Waddle, Sheriff of Clarke County, moved in the following order, viz.

The students of the Grammar school—the Freshman, Sophomore and Junior Classes—the candidates for the first and second Degree—the Board of Trustees . . . in the following order, viz:

1. A prayer by the Rev. Hope Hull.
2. The declaration of American Independence read by Mr. Tutor Lewis.
3. A Latin Salutatory Oration against party spirit, by James Meriwether.
4. A French Oration, in support of Dr. Prices opinion . . . by John Allan.
5. An English Oration advocating the study of the ancient Languages by Thomas Greer.
6. A Comic Dialogue, by Hamilton, Greer, Meigs, Oneal, Rutherford, and Meriwether.
7. An English Oration in defence of the liberty of the Seas by Samuel William Meigs.
8. A Greek Oration, on Education, by Thomas Hamilton.
9. An English Oration on Agricultures, by George Putnam.
10. An English Oration in favor of a passive commerce, by Joseph Woodruff Oneal.
11. An English Oration in favor of an active commerce, by William Rutherford.
12. A Comic Dialogue, by Greer, Hamilton, Meigs, Meriwether and Rutherford.
13. A Poetic Oration, by James D. Jackson, candidate for the degree of A. M. on the powers of the mind, and the advantages of liberal education.
14. The Valedictory Oration, by John Douglas.

After the conferring of degrees, Hull concluded the commencement exercises with prayer. The next year, in 1808, the preacher seized the initiative to build a chapel for the university. A need for a chapel existed, but funds were scarce. Thus, Hull made a proposal to board members that if they would give \$100 for a belfry he would see that a chapel, 40 x 60 and 18 feet high, would be erected. The offer was accepted, and several trustees stepped up to the plate and made contributions to the chapel fund. Thomas Flournay gave \$32; General Twiggs contributed \$50; and Peter Randolph gave \$200. The chapel was soon constructed.

The year 1808 also brought about a decline in the enrollment of students, and funds in the treasury were diminished. The board “learned with sincere regret that the number of students in the college are reduced from thirty to thirteen and in the grammar school from forty to twenty-five.” The board appointed a committee to examine the causes for the decline, and while many causes may have contributed to the decrease in enrollment, surely the ongoing conflict between the college’s president and the board of trustees played a role in the school’s struggles.

Deteriorating Relationship with Josiah Meigs

Meigs, a native of Connecticut, was born in 1757 and graduated from Yale College at twenty-one years of age. While a student at Yale, he was in 1781 named as tutor of mathematics and natural philosophy. By 1794, he was professor at the college. After marriage to Clara Benjamin, Meigs moved to Bermuda, where he practiced law for a brief period. In 1801, Meigs became president of what was then Franklin College. He came with impeccable credentials and put the new school on a strong foundation. But by 1808, his relationship with the board of trustees had begun to deteriorate and would continue to decline over the next two years.

Reverend Hull would become one of Meigs’s most vocal opponents and eventually led the charge in asking for the president’s dismissal. Affidavits filed with board minutes accused the president of flippant, angry aspersions spoken against the board, and apparently the president had implied that monies from the sale of lands had been pocketed by the board members. The animosity between the president and the board eventually culminated in the termination of Meigs in 1810, animosity best understood by examining the following two affidavits by Hull and Augustin Clayton, which were accepted into the board minutes in August 1811:

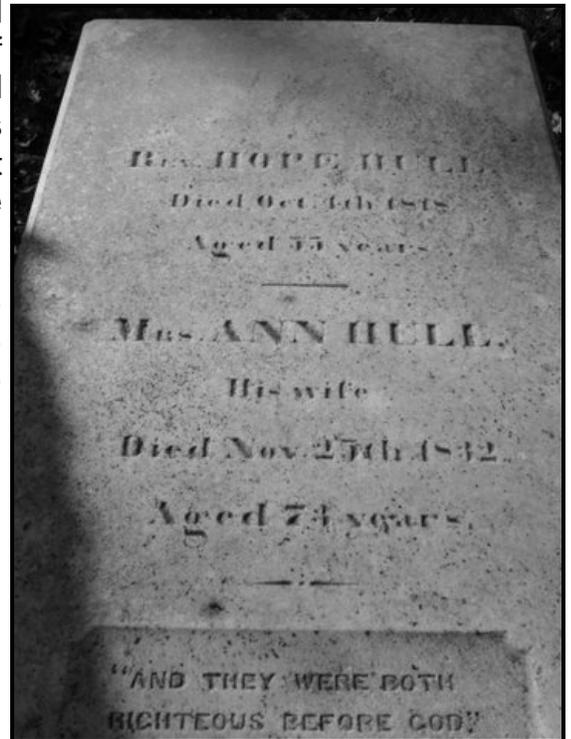
Hope Hull, one of the members of this board, gives the following information and exhibits the same as charges against Mr. Professor Meigs, which charges should be inquired into by the board, viz.: That to the best of his recollection the day after the adjournment of the board in August last, and at the door of the printing office, he, Mr. Meigs, addressing himself to Mr. Hull, uttered in substance the following words: “You have appointed Campbell your secretary. However, I suppose he will do well enough as a secretary for the Tories!” Mr. Meigs has further said in the presence of Mr. Hull, that “the State of Georgia had great reason to thank God for one honest man—Judge Early—if it had not been for him the lands belonging to the institution would have been sold and the money pocketed,” and many other expressions and observations of a similar import, but not now precisely recollected.

(Signed) Hope Hull

Sworn to before me, this 8th August, 1811, at Athens
Robert Walker, Judge.

In a conversation with Mr. Meigs a few days after the adjournment of the board in August last, upon the subject of the congressional and county elections, he observed in substance as follows: "You," addressing himself to me, "cannot think to gain the confidence of the people after your conduct relative to the college lands. The facts stated in the piece that appeared in the Express against you last week were furnished by me, and there are other facts which I intend to communicate. But I cannot so much blame you; for you are a tool of other great men." But for one honest man, or the only honest man among them, the board of trustees would have sold the college lands and would have squandered the money away to their own uses. They were all a damned pack or band of Tories and speculators, and if they had have (sic) turned him out of his office, he would have published their villainy and dishonesty to the world and have shown them in their proper colors. They had made him professor of natural philosophy and chemistry and given him a poor pitiful salary of twelve hundred dollars—damn them—he reckoned they would make him next professor of cabbages and turnips—and much more such conversation not now detailed, but the above is the substance of the conversation.

(Signed) Augustin S. Clayton.
Sworn to before me, this 8th August, 1811, at Athens.
Robert Walker, Judge.



The text on the Rev. Hull's memorial marker, Oconee Hill Cemetery, Athens, Georgia.

Upon Meigs's resignation, the board extended an offer to retain his services as a professor for a brief period with remuneration of \$1,200 a year. Insulted by the offer, Meigs complained that he was being offered the position of professor of cabbages and turnips. The once highly esteemed president sarcastically sent a bill to the board for his "ringing the bell," a bill that was referred to the Prudential Committee.

During the tension between the board and president, Meigs mounted a vigorous defense of the charges of misconduct brought against him. Interestingly, records of his defense were not a part of board minutes, but the September 28, 1811 issues of *The Republican* and *Savannah Ledger* published affidavits supporting Meigs.

Upon Meigs's departure from leadership of the college, Hull, as chairman of the Prudential Committee, was appointed as acting president until the vacancy was filled. The college soon hired the Reverend John Brown of Columbia, South Carolina, as its third president.

Leading and Living in the Community of Athens

While continuing his service to the young university in the early years of the nineteenth century, Hull also became an active civic leader, including service as a bank superintendent. In the fall of 1807, the Georgia legislature enacted a law establishing the Planter's Bank of the State of Georgia. Branches were located in various cities. The central office of the bank was located in Athens, and Hull, William Malone, and Stephen Thomas were appointed as bank superintendents.

In addition to his leadership in the community, Hull continued his preaching ministry, speaking often at locations in and around Athens. Early newspapers often announced his preaching engagements, weddings, and other pastoral duties. One of those newspapers, the *Georgia Express*, in 1812 communicated the sad news of the death of one of Hull's daughters. On Friday, August 28, that newspaper noted: "Died on Friday last after a short illness, Miss Nancy Hull, aged 11 years, eldest daughter of the Rev. Hope Hull." Three weeks later, on September 18, the same newspaper carried this announcement: "The public are respectfully informed that the funeral of Miss Nancy Hull will be preached by the Rev. Mr. Pierce at Hull's meeting house on Tuesday next." Doubtless, the enormity of such grief took its toll on the influential Methodist leader.

In spite of his own personal loss, Hull soon had to officiate at the funeral of a young boy, a death that wrenched the heart of the small village of Athens. Newspapers carried reports on March 26, 1813, about the son of Steven Thomas, a fellow bank superintendent with Hull at the Planter's Bank at Athens:

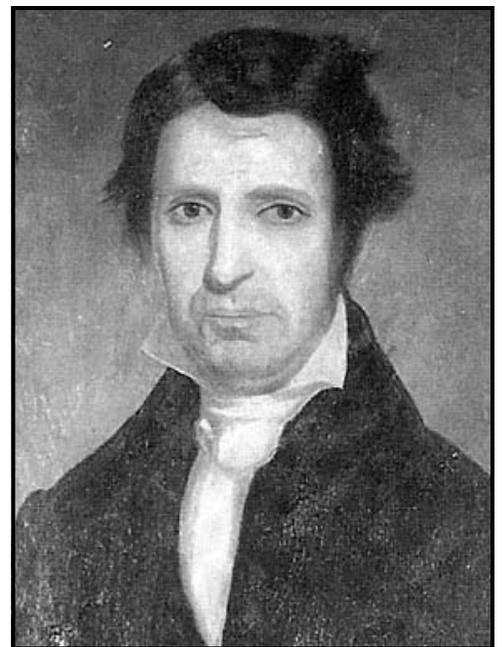
Melancholy Occurrence. It has seldom fallen to the lot of the Editor of this paper to announce a more melancholy event than occurred in our village on Sunday last. The only son of Mr. Stevens Thomas, a youth of about six years of age, accompanied by two little boys . . . walked down in the afternoon to the banks of the river . . . entered the water to bathe—a few steps carried him beyond his depth and before the alarm was given and effectual assistance procured, the principal of life had been too long suspended . . . he was at last borne to the house of his afflicted parents by the assembled population of Athens . . . James Thomas was a lively and animated youth . . . the body was attended to the place of interment the ensuing day by the inhabitants of the villages after a very patriotic address from Parson Hull.

The plethora of pastoral and civic duties and his personal loss did not diminish Hull's interest in serving in the Georgia legislature. The *Athens Gazette* on September 28, 1815 disclosed the candidates from Clarke County for the Georgia House of Representatives and for the State Senate. Those listed as interested in running for the senate were Captain A. Cook and Rev. Mr. Hull. Cook was elected, and he later served the state of Georgia as a member of congress.

Expanding Influence to Alabama through Abner McGehee

Even though Reverend Hull traveled widely, he never visited the Alabama Territory. Yet his influence is still felt in the area. A large rural postal route in Montgomery and Lowndes Counties are named for him. A loosely defined community named for him. The person responsible for perpetuating the influence of Hull in Alabama was Abner McGehee.

Born February 17, 1779, in Virginia, McGehee was the nephew of the founder of Alabama Town, General John Scott. Alabama Town merged with New Philadelphia in December 1819 thereby forming the city of Montgomery, Alabama. In 1827, McGehee joined numerous other residents of northeast Georgia who had migrated to Alabama. Many of those from the Broad River area settled around the towns of Montgomery and



Abner McGehee

Cahaba, and some of these new Alabama residents influenced early politics in their new region, including William Wyatt Bibb, who was appointed by President James Monroe as governor of the newly created Alabama Territory.

When McGehee arrived in Alabama, he immediately established himself as a successful business leader and entrepreneur. He became an affluent planter, tanner, and trader. McGehee also became a generous philanthropist of his day, and he was a man of faith, a faith he attributed to Hope Hull, the Methodist minister who was instrumental in leading his family to Christian commitment and into the Methodist church.

Experiencing Revival in the Broad River Settlement, 1809

McGehee's connection with Hull began in 1809 during a religious revival that took place in the Broad River settlement. This revival was one of many that took place in the early nineteenth century in what is now referred to as the Second Great Awakening. During this awakening, Baptists and Methodists experienced tremendous gains in membership, and the Methodists especially benefitted from the use of camp meetings during the season of spiritual fervor.

Describing the revivals that took place in Georgia, Ellis Merten Coulter in *Old Petersburg and the Broad River Valley* of Georgia wrote: "A great Methodist revival which hit the Broad River in 1809 produced lasting effects for the good of the church." Harold A. Lawrence and John Wright Boyd also have referred to "the great Methodist revival period, beginning in 1809." Even David Benedict in *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World* published in 1813 stated, "In 1809 another revival began in the upper part of the State, in the bounds of Georgia and Sarepta Associations, and many hundreds were born into the Kingdom of God, and united with the churches of his saints."

Two preachers distinguished themselves in reaping the harvest of hundreds of new adherents and converts as the revival swept through the Broad River area: James Russell, a fiery and powerful communicator and Hope Hull. They often worked together in the same meetings. According to George Gillman Smith, "There was a great revival in 1809 along the Broad and Little Rivers under the preaching of Russell, in which many of the famous Broad River people were converted and joined the Methodist Church. Methodism now extended her circuits until they reached every part of the State of Georgia." Although unmentioned in the Smith commentary, Hull and James Russell preached together in camp meetings and in various locations. In *My New Life* published in 2006 by Jack Ray Griffin and Robert Silas Griffin, the authors trace their Methodist roots to the 1808 conversion of an ancestor, Thomas Griffin. The account demonstrates how closely Hope Hull and James Russell worked together in revival meetings:

Thomas Griffin, born September 24, 1787, in Cumberland County, Virginia, was converted to Christianity in a Methodist meeting in Georgia in 1808. The no longer doubting Thomas of the Griffin family testified:

There was to be a two days' meeting at Pope's Chapel in Ogelthorpe. Hope Hull and James Russell were to hold it in conjunction to Benjamin Blanton. Several of our relatives, to wit-Anthony Smith and others were expected up to the meeting. My mother and myself went to meet them and of course to welcome them home. I went to laugh and help them circulate little tales that would have a bearing on the Methodists. I well recollect that I thought James Russell an enthusiast. Hope Hull came down and sang a hymn that made my flesh tremble on me, and caused an awful sense of the hereafter to press on my mind that has not lost its charm though it was that it was thirty-two years ago that it was sung.

Let thy kingdom come, blessed Savior-
 Come and bid our warring cease-
 Come, oh come, and reign forever-
 God of love and Prince of Peace-
 Visit now poor bleeding Zion-
 Hear thy people moan and weep-
 Day and night thy lambs are crying-
 The good shepherd, feed thy sheep.

I think it was the first time I had ever heard it sung. Mrs. Patrick broke forth and shouted. It fell on me like a shock. There was a small class there composed of the Popes, Hills, Benjamin Blanton, Mr. Turman, and William Patrick. They were a steady, orderly people and I thought well of Blanton. At night there was a meeting. My cousin Anthony Smith and the young Andrews wished to go so I went too. Russell preached and in his tremendous conclusion, he called them (the congregation) up to be prayed for and several went. The devil rendered me indignant and after a little, left the house. My wicked lion had got disturbed in his cage. At Sunday,



Rev. Hope Hull's grave is identified by the table-top marker, Oconee Hill Cemetery, Athens, Georgia.

Hope Hull preached. He spoke like a man of God; there was a deep, marked attention among the large audience. He painted the agonies of the cross with all those tones and gestures he was capable of. In fact, looking back after 32 years with what I have learned since, I would now pronounce it: The Divine Eloquence of the Holy Ghost.

Griffin was converted as a result. He said, "I got Benjamin Blanton to baptize me at Pope's Chapel in the winter of 1810." As a result of this revival and because of the ministry of Hull, the McGehee family came to faith.

Coming to Faith: The Conversion of Micajah McGehee

Micajah McGehee, father to Abner, was a prominent Broad River settler who joined the Methodist Church in 1809. Smith recounted McGehee's conversion, recording several variant spellings of the family surname:

In 1809 there was a sweeping revival among them. The father of Governor Gilmer was converted and joined the church during that meeting. He was a well-to-do Virginia planter, descended from a distinguished Virginia family, and one which afterwards gave two governors to southern states. Micajah McGehee, another influential man, who had lived to very mature years without religion, joined the church at that time, the princely Edmund McGhee of Mississippi, Miles McGhee of the same state, and many of that name in Georgia, are descendants of his family.

Abner McGehee was also converted in 1809. He was thirty years old at the time.

The McGehee family had moved from Prince Edward County, Virginia to Wilkes County Georgia, where Micajah McGehee accumulated 3,104 acres of land between 1785 and 1790. He became a successful tobacco planter. George Gilmer recalled that Micajah was the first of the settlers to plant a peach orchard on the waters of the Broad River and to turn its fruit into brandy and then into dollars. With money earned from this endeavor, McGehee built one of the first comfortable frame-houses on the river. "It had four rooms below stairs, several above, was covered with shingles and painted red. It became a gathering place for amusement and dancing."

Of McGehee's use of the brandy, Ellis Coulter provided this commentary:

The older ones enlivened their temperament with a touch of brandy, but not enough to befuddle the brain. Micajah was the first to plant an extensive peach orchard in the Broad River Valley. He turned most of his fruit into brandy which he sold for at least \$1600 a year. Drinking brandy was customary, but not to the extent to which Micajah consumed it. It was said that when he was young he could drink brandy all day without becoming drunk. In his old age he confined himself to a quart a day.

Others declared that the reduction of brandy consumption caused his death in 1811. Harold Lawrence in *The First Methodist Conference in Georgia* noted an interesting follow-up to the 1809 revival that swept the Broad River settlement, especially for those living on the Goosepond tributary of the Broad River:

In 1809 an acre of land was purchased for the sum of one dollar from Samuel Strong by a group obviously acting as trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church. These trustees, namely: Micajah Clark, Thomas M. Gilmer, Charles L. Mathews, James Bradley and Micajah McGehee were all Goosepond Methodists and neighbors to George Mathews and James Marks. The deed to this one acre (see: Oglethorpe Deed Bk. F, P. 20) proposes that the property was for the building of a meetinghouse and the use of a Methodist society which came to be called Mt. Zion M.E. Church. Its location was on the south side of Goosepond Creek, directly across the creek from the eastern boundary line of Mathews' Goosepond tract, on the same side of the road as his house.

Migrating to Alabama

Abner McGehee left the Broad River Settlement and arrived in Montgomery County, Alabama in 1827. He was not alone. Many other prominent families from northeast Georgia had relocated in what was now the eight-year old state of Alabama. Although many had experienced success in the Broad River community, the lure of cheap land and new opportunities for business resulted in countless families migrating to the southwest. "Alabama Fever" was epidemic.



Obelisk erected to the memory of Abner McGehee, McGehee Cemetery, Hope Hull, Alabama.

Before departing for Alabama, McGehee was already wealthy, thus economic gain was not what lured him westward. Other factors thus were more significant in precipitating this move. The October 1945 edition of the Alabama Bible Society's Quarterly provides some insight. In an article titled "Abner McGehee Memorial Edition," a McGehee descendant, Clanton Ware Williams, offered his opinion on the move based on his research and his academic work at the University of Alabama in 1928. Williams quoted Gilmer as stating that the Georgia legislature had incorporated a company to improve the navigation of the Broad River and the company had contracted with McGehee to do the work, who had backed out of the contract when he learned that some agreements had been misrepresented. The company sued him and recovered the full amount of his bond which was estimated by his descendants to be \$100,000. Given these financial realities, McGehee loaded up his family, slaves, and possessions and moved west to make a new life.



Memorial to Abner McGehee placed by the Alabama Bible Society, 1950, at Hope Hull United Methodist Church

Along with a few relatives and acquaintances from the Broad River Settlement, the McGehee family relocated in west Montgomery County, and soon accumulated enough land to comprise a large plantation. In 1833, McGehee built the Planters Hotel on Court Square in Montgomery. Later he rebuilt the hotel after it burned. At one time, he owned 10,000 acres of land and also many valuable lots in the city of Montgomery. He was instrumental in building the South Plank Road taking people to Mobile through his property. Along with a few others, McGehee helped bring railroads to the state, including the seventy-six-mile line from Montgomery to West Point, Georgia. He eventually was best known as a railroad magnate, serving as a large stockholder of the Montgomery-West Point Railroad. McGehee also started the iron industry in Alabama. Three years before his death, he founded and generously endowed the Alabama Bible Society.

After his conversion in 1809 under the preaching of Hope Hull, McGehee became a devout Methodist. After moving to Alabama, he broke away from the Methodist Episcopal Church and strongly supported with finances and influence the emerging Methodist Protestant Church. In 1830, McGehee was instrumental in the establishment and naming of the Hope Hull Methodist Protestant Church, which was constructed of hewn logs and built on the McGehee plantation.

McGehee died in 1855 and was buried in the family cemetery, which is now accessible through the Industrial Park in Hope Hull. The epitaph on the McGehee obelisk reads:

Sacred to the memory of Abner McGehee who died February 19, 1855—Aged seventy six years and one day. His rare enterprise, energy, and industry, united with integrity made him a model man in all the relations of life; and insured him great wealth which he distributed cheerfully and with noble hearted liberality for the glory of God and the good of man. A Christian in heart and life, he lived and died in the communion of the Methodist Protestant Church. He parted in great peace and comfort of soul and sleeps in Jesus.

The continuing strength of human influence can be felt by those whose lives are enriched by living in the Hope Hull community, a community named for the man who introduced the McGehee family to faith.

Getting the Name Right: Is It McGehee's Switch or Hope Hull?

Originally, the settlement now called Hope Hull was named McGehee's Switch. It developed around the Montgomery and Mobile Railroad that traversed the McGehee Plantation. But soon after its development, McGehee changed the name of the settlement to Hope Hull, a name which is the more popular of the two today. "McGehees" continues to be used in context of the railroad, which is still operational. County maps printed by the Department of Transportation continue to use both nomenclatures.

Anson West, the noted Methodist historian, referred to those names familiar to the Broad River Settlement of Georgia:

Benajah S. Bibb, Thomas Jarrett, Abner McGhee, and William Taylor moved to Montgomery County, Alabama, and located homes and domiciled themselves between Catoma and Pintlala Creeks about the year 1822. William Taylor's place was eight miles from the town of Montgomery, and exactly south of that town, and in Township fifteen and Range eighteen. Benajah S. Bibb's place was five or six miles south-west of the town of Montgomery, and in Township fifteen and Range seventeen. Abner McGhee possessed himself of a large body of land, and his place, perhaps, became central to the community, and on his land and near the Federal Road and about ten miles south-west of the town of Montgomery, a church was built, so soon as it could be conveniently done after these men had fixed their habitations and the place was called Hope Hull, after the great Methodist man of that name in Georgia.



Johnson, Alvin Jewett
Alabama-Florida Railroad
New York: Johnson and Ward 1863
W.S. Hoole Special Collection Library
<http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/>

Garrett, J.M., County Engineer
Map of Montgomery County 1901
Louisville and Nashville Railroad
Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1901, Made for Board of Revenue
Alabama Department of Archives and History
<http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/>

Growing and Expanding: the Hope Hull Community Today

The first post office in the area was known as McGehee's. It began service on March 8, 1875 and discontinued service on January 8, 1877. The postmaster was Thomas Stacy, a Confederate Veteran, who was buried in the Bethel Cemetery in Pintlala. Postal service to the area resumed on June 18, 1877 under the auspices of the Hope Hull Post Office, and William E. McGehee became postmaster. The Hope Hull Post Office has provided uninterrupted services ever since.

Today the Hope Hull United Methodist Church, which was established in 1830, continues to grow and thrive. In 1950 the Alabama Bible Society placed a marble monument on church grounds memorializing Abner McGehee. The marker faces Wasden Road.

The McGehee Cemetery is wonderfully maintained by Huey C. Marshall, III, a McGehee descendant. Interest in the cemetery was revived a few years ago thanks to the efforts of Ethel Tankersley Todd and Joyce Nicoll, also a McGehee descendant. Their work inspired the

involvement of the Pintlala Historical Association. The Industrial Park with the growth of various industries has emerged around this historic landmark that pays tribute directly to Abner McGehee and indirectly to the effective ministry of Hull.

On November 17, 2010, Hope Hull citizens, community leaders, and McGehee descendants prepared for the arrival of yet another industry. They met with representatives of Montgomery's

Industrial Board and Lee Anne Wofford of the Alabama Historical Commission to discuss the future location of Hyundai Heavy Industries, Ltd, in Hope Hull. That automobile manufacturer will acquire and use property closely bordering on the historic cemetery. Like good neighbors who embrace the future without discarding the past, agreements were reached in a good-faith effort to celebrate both. Abner McGehee would be proud. No one understood the value of industrial development and economic opportunity better than he.

Setting Forth Future Historic Research Challenges

Two questions have emerged in the completion of this research. If it is true that endemic to the culture of every community is a past worth knowing and preserving, then what may be done to educate local citizens regarding the powerful influence of Hull and the founding influence of Abner McGehee? Second, is it possible to know the specific location of the plantation home of Abner McGehee and the original location of the Hope Hull Methodist Church?

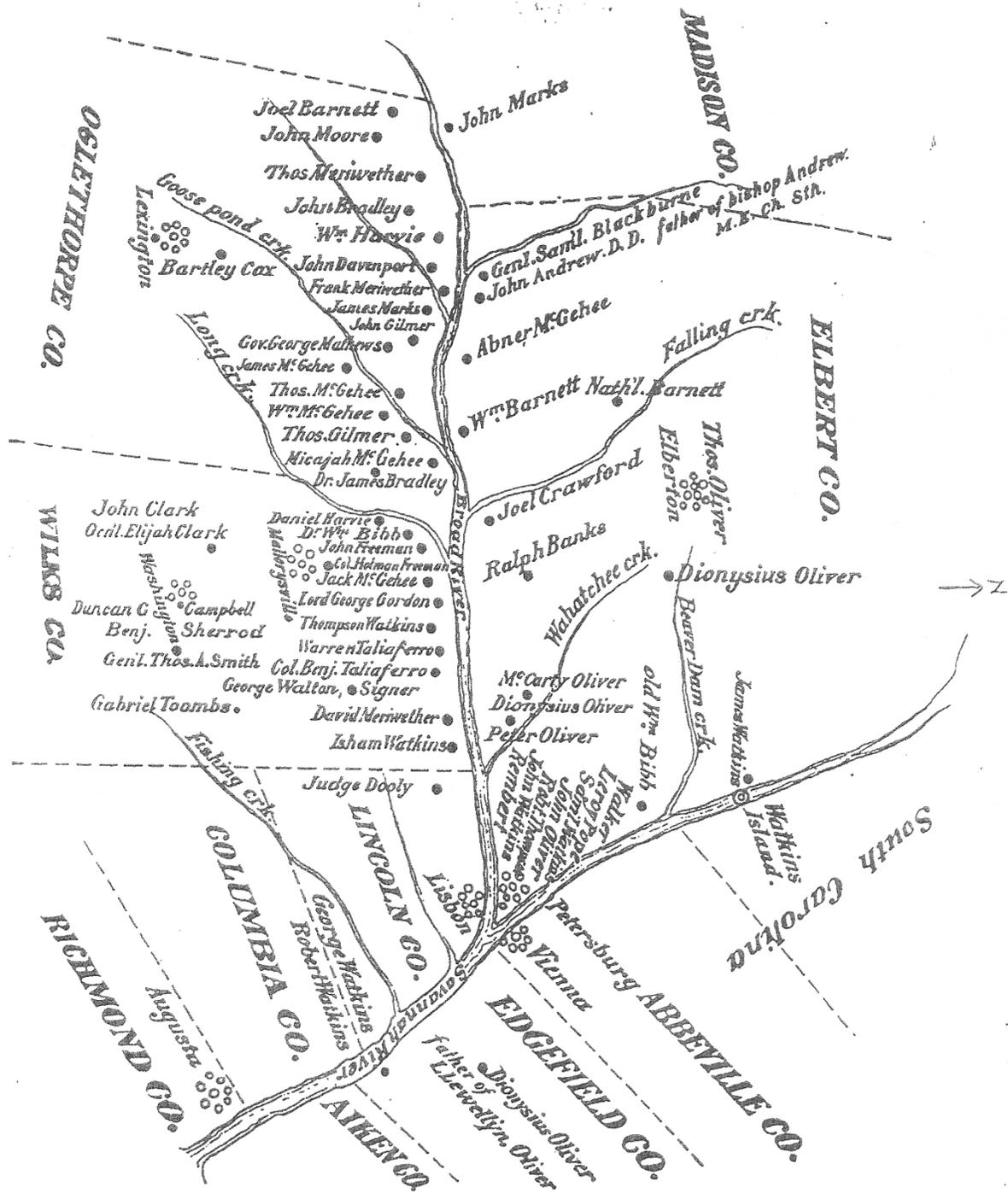


Hope Hull Post Office, 2010



Hope Hull United Methodist Church, 2010

¹ Visit www.pintlalahistoricalassociation.com



Governor Gilmer's Map of the BROAD RIVER SETTLEMENT, GEORGIA, enlarged to include Elbert County, after 1780. and also some other settlers.

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**PINTLALA HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION**

*c/o Pintlala Public Library
255 Federal Road
Hope Hull, AL 36043*

NEXT MEETING

**JANUARY 16TH, 2011
2:30 P.M.**

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Areas of Interest _____

If you are interested in genealogy, please indicate family surnames _____

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