

LAVERGNE
BY
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The first property in the area was deeded to Samuel Buchanan in 1788 but had been located in 1785 and signed by Richard Caswell Aug. 1, 1787. The 400 acre tract was located along Hurricane Creek, then Rutherford County, North Carolina. The early 1819 map of Rutherford County, Tennessee shows the boundaries to extend far into present Davidson County, and it is easy to see how Donelson and LaVergne have the same "back yards," so to speak. Both communities could share a few of the early families settling along Stones River. Samuel's land was on both sides of the creek north of the present Rutherford-Davidson County line bridge. The line at this point has been changed numerous times through various periods of our Tennessee State Legislature. Both Samuel and John Buchanan were famous Indian fighters and both owned land in this northwest section of the county.

Buchanan family records state Sam was killed by Indians at the "Bluff" in 1783, and that he never married. Early Tennessee history accounts such as Ransey, Putnam, Hale and Merritt, and Clayton all agree he was killed at the hands of Indians but all vary the death date. Most agree he was killed by 1788, however, none of these could be accurate since Sam signed a deed transfer in 1784 and was a juror in 1789. His death occurred in 1793 and his inventory at death left a widow named Rebecca.

1. Davidson County Reg. Book A. p. 324
2. Hale and Merritt, Vol. 1
3. Davidson County Wills and Inventories, Microfilm #427, Tennessee Library and Archives, Nashville.

Sam was in a field plowing when Indians fired upon him. He ran while twelve savage pursuers overtook and killed him. The bluff at which he was killed was at Hurricane Creek and he had been plowing his own field at his own station when attacked. Sam came into the frontier wilderness with John, helped settle French Lick, fought Indians, served several times a juror, bought and sold land, married, ect. It would seem more likely that he would establish his own interest rather than stay at the Bluff at French Lick, or for that matter at the John Buchanan Station. His own land along Hurricane Creek became Samuel Buchanan's station and later Buchanansville.

Official Post Office records show Buchanansville, Davidson County changed to Mount View, March 8, 1827, then changed back to Buchanan-ville on January 26, 1837. It was again changed to Mount View, March 1, 1842, then finally to LaVergne, Rutherford County on August 23, 1852. Unofficially it was given several other names including Rutherford City, Limestone, and Cedar Point. The man for whom the city was named referred to the community as Rutherford or Rutherford City. In deciding the date of establishment for the city seal design, 1803 seemed to be the best date. Obviously if Sam was killed in 1793, the danger of Indian attack was still too great to settle in the frontier land. Yet by 1803, ten years later, the new Rutherford County was chartered and County Court was held in 1804. Rock Springs Baptist Church was opened July 21, 1804 and its enrollment was of good size. The actual settlement date was between 1793 when Sam was killed and 1803 when Rutherford County was chartered.

The city was named for Francis Roulhac, born in Limoges, France March 15, 1767. He was christened at birth: Francois Leonard Gregoire de Roulhac de LaVergne. When he came to America, he anglicized his name, shortening it to Francis Roulhac. He was both a doctor and a lawyer but practiced neither profession to a great degree. In his younger life he preferred a mercantile life, in later years he was happiest on his farm.

Roulhac had married Margaret Gray of North Carolina. Her sister had married a Butler who had died or was killed, and she had been given land in Rutherford County by her father-in-law. The Roulhacs brought the sister to "Rutherford" and continued on to Montgomery County. A short time later, "Aunt Butler", as the Roulhac children called her, asked them to move to Rutherford and she would deed her land to them. The Roulhacs came to LaVergne in 1822.

Francis knew the importance of sending to and receiving mail from Europe, the West Indies and **eastern United States**, all places where he had connections. He really couldn't have cared less WHAT the city was named, rather THAT the city retained a post office. Because of this intense post office concern, the community was named LaVergne for him, the day Roulhac died. Firestone is located where Roulhac's home once stood. One of the listed Mount View Post Offices was located a short distance of Roulhac's home. If he could know what had now come to pass and the projected plans for the future in Interchange City, he would be the first to be pleased.

Williams Kimbro and John Hill were two men of means and stature who probably were the most instrumental in setting a pattern for living

in this community. Both men served in County Court, Kimbro's land was south of the community including the top of a high elevation. The land was still in the Kimbro family until very recently when it was sold for community development. The early roads were cleared, laid out, and the overseers were responsible men in the area. One of these roads was a portion of the original Nashville-Murfreesboro-Chattanooga Pike which came through LaVergne about where the present I-24 highway is located. Of course, its route was changed on more than one occasion by economic or population needs and post office site changes.

John Hill, one of the first Magistrates of the County, built the lovely Nelson home which was recently razed to make way for the Long-Bell Industry completed early this year. Hill was a son of Green Hill, the Father of Methodism in Middle Tennessee. Green Hill divided a 640 acre land grant tract between two of his sons, Thomas and John. Squire Hill and his wife later moved to another community. Early court minutes list a good many endeavors by John Hill when he lived in what was to become the LaVergne community.

During the time Murfreesboro was the capital of the State, education seemed to be the prime interest next to and often interlocking politics. Dr. James Priestley of Princeton University had come to the Nashville Academy and was probably one of the greatest forces in setting high educational standards in Middle Tennessee. His home was located in what was to become Donelson, and he had several family members living in the LaVergne community. A granddaughter is buried in the Mason Cemetery off Hollandale Road. In most of the old letters

of the LaVergne Collection, references are continually made to planning and receiving higher education within a 30-mile radius of LaVergne. Public education did not come until a century later.

About 1833 the city was laid out by John Hill, son-in-law of Francis Roulhac and nephew of Squire Hill. He was an enterprising young man who had a rope and bagging factory in Lebanon. Young Hill had a store and saw mill near his home which was located where the Tennessee Farmers Co-op lands are now situated. However, the earliest stores were operated by Joe Kimbro whose store was really a plantation commissary. The Kimbro lands were on a portion of Signal Mountain and surrounding terrain, and the Kimbro store was convenient to the Rock Springs community as well as to Mt. View, Buchanansville, or LaVergne. The other early store was operated by Benjamin Ferguson down on the river bend on the former Bob Alexander place. According to one of the old ledgers that used to be housed in the Hermitage Museum at Andrew Jackson's home, Jackson bought frequently from Ferguson. Undoubtedly there had to be trading posts or other early stores and certainly there was one in Buchanansville near the old Buchanan Cemetery. The old cemetery once served as the city cemetery and is near the heart of the Buchanansville community. The names of the store owners throughout the time of settlement to a more recent time would, more often than not, be lost to time.

The late 1840's and 60's brought a period of time when LaVergne spawned a lot of doctors. This was due primarily to Dr. James Charlton who had purchased the old Stokely Donelson tract. His home contained a post office called Elm Hill and was located north of the LaVergne

community. According to verification of a State highway historian, Elm Hill Pike terminated at the home of Dr. Charlton. As the doctor made his rounds twice a week in LaVergne, he also carried the mail. He had a small rock and frame building in the far corner of his front yard and it was here that young aspiring doctors "read" medicine under Dr. Charlton.

"Railroad interest was at fever pitch," stated one of the early Neal letters. It was the railroad that brought economy to LaVergne in 1852. It was developing into a busy freight stop and was incorporated as a city Feb. 28, 1860. The old station was torn down at the end of World War II, but at the turn of the century it was the gathering place for the young folks. J. R. Park was station agent who kept the station neat and clean. Brightly colored flowers were nearly always found around the station. Park lived in the former John Hill home, Cherry Shade, across from the station and had the first phonograph in town. This was the obvious reason young folks delighted in the station.

The old fort where Nathan Bedford Forrest once trained his troops is now owned by Glen Waldron. It lies south of the old Nashville Pike but during the War Between the States, it was found just off the Jefferson Pike which continued from the Robert Pope place to the Nolensville, Columbia ect. The King home was located between the old fort and Signal Knob, a short distance to the south. Its location was one of the reasons for its being burned to the ground during the war. The fort was the scene of several skirmishes and traded hands more than once between Union and Confederate forces.

According to J. T. Dougherty's "Battle of LaVergne," "General Braxton Bragg gave orders to slow the Union Army down to avoid a general engagement until they reached Murfreesboro. This the Confederates accomplished quite well. General Crittenden's Corps under Rosecrans advanced toward Murfreesboro on the Murfreesboro Pike. On Dec. 26, 1862, he found LaVergne to be a small village with a desirable railroad depot that could move men and supplies closer to Murfreesboro. His men moved toward Hurricane Creek but the Confederate Cavalry under the Command of mighty Joe Wheeler waited across the creek with 2,500 men and a battery of 4 gun artillery. Crittenden thought he was engaged with at least a division so he sent for re-inforcements and deployed his men in line for a major engagement. Rosecrans appeared and thought, too, it was a major battle and sent for Thomas. After several hours, the Confederates retreated into the town to take up defensive positions. "Dougherty states the skirmish became house to house combat as Wheeler's men fired from doorways and windows.

When the railroad had been built through the town, it became necessary for the Nashville-Murfreesboro Pike to be nearer the railroad. This was accomplished by using a portion of an existing road and the new section of Nashville-Murfreesboro Pike ran parallel with the tracks for a short distance and crossed the tracks on the north end of the underpass. A Union wagon train under the command of McCook was progressing toward Murfreesboro with supplies. On December 30, 1862, Wheeler had been making his famed circuitous route when he came upon McCook's train. He attacked at the edge of the northwest side

of the village. An artist sketch depicts a church in the background⁶ thought to be Ebenezer Methodist Church. (Later, the Presbyterian church used the same foundation.) Burning wagons were scattered in the surrounding fields on both sides of the present Highway #41 between the present Tennessee Farmers Co-op land and the old Sam Buchanan Station.

An estimated \$1,000,000 worth of supplies was destroyed and 700 prisoners were taken. Again, according to Dougherty's account, "the work of parolling prisoners, burning wagons, exchanging arms and ammunition, and driving off horses and mules consumed the rest of the day. On the 31st Wheeler continued toward Nolensville burning a forage train on Rock Springs Road and another wagon train at Nolensville capturing 300 men."

Only a portion of the war history can be depicted here but mention should be made of the Mary Neal King Diary,⁷ the story of Kate Lyle,⁸ the account of the October 7, 1862 battle at the Old Fort, the store of Cherry Shade being used as a hospital with its poem⁹ written by Capt. Ira Davenport who was wounded during the Battle of LaVergne, and the skirmishes along Stones River.

It would be impossible to list all the early families of LaVergne-- only a few are listed and then not in any special order: Kimbro, Hill, Buchanan, Fly, May, Nance, Williams, Davis, Goodman, Morton, Thompson,

6. Walter Hoover Collection, Smyrna
7. Ernest King Johns Collection, Smyrna
8. Mary Kate, Heroine of LaVergne, Marian Herndon Dunn
9. Charles W. McKay, Attorney, Louisville

Carter, Nelson, Mason, Banton, Butler, Roulhac, Charton, Hibbett, Gooch, White, Mullins (Mulherrin), Neal, Green, Bailey, Stephens, Mitchell, Hartman, Akin, Austin, Montgomery, Fergus, Tune, Wood, Noe, Johnson, Finch, Seat, Coleman, Ewing, Cannon, Gregory, Owen, Goodloe, King, Gowen, Merritt, Ferguson, Gambill, Burt, Cawthon, and others.

Like its sister communities, LaVergne fared badly during the War Between the States and the reconstruction days were as difficult there as in any other place. The railroad was probably the prime factor that kept LaVergne's economy alive and the people's determination was another factor that kept it going. Education, religion, and politics prevailed as major concerns of the city.

The first telephone was installed in the Burt home in 1904. The Mason family, early Middle Tennessee and LaVergne settlers, had descendants with vision and foresight. Although C. I. Mason was president of the company, Miss Dora Mason was secretary and probably knew more of the whole installation of that period than anyone else. The company was sold to George Kersey and a partner and then later sold to General Telephone Company. The present dial system was preceeded by the old wall crank telephones. The receiver was picked up, The crank turned, and "central" said, Number please." She also gave the time of day, where someone could be reached on emergency, and other gems of information. Mary Kersey and Ernestine Fergus were the best operators in town--they were also about the only operators in town.

In 1925, the city was incorporated again Allen Mason was its first mayor. Later, electricity was introduced and O. B. Tucker,

father of Mason Tucker of the RUTHERFORD COURIER, was station agent and was instrumental in getting the electricity installed. Most new things are met with resistance but the reluctance to accept electricity held fears of instant and costly street lights to the city of LaVergne. Yet progress pushed itself into being and electric lights came to LaVergne.

The oldest church in LaVergne is the Saint James Christian Methodist Episcopal Church organized by Rev. Columbus Walker in 1870. Two of its members in 1972 were Mrs. Elizabeth Trimble and Mrs. Bertha Peebles. Both worked on getting the church history prepared and both were 94 years of age. The church might well be the oldest black church in the county. Its location which has remained the same is near the corner of Highway #41 and Stones River Road. It has an active program and is an asset to the community.

Jefferson Pike Church of Christ got its start in 1920, on the Jim Gowen land on Jefferson Pike. Harvey Merritt and Jeff Owens were instrumental in getting the church started. Will and George Merritt, twin sons of Harvey Merritt followed in their father's footsteps and taught Bible classes in the early church. In 1951, the congregation purchased an acre of land from Bud Pope and the building then on the property of Sadie Charlton Herndon was given as a gift. The building was moved to its present location. Marian Herndon Dunn has written the church history and the full text is to be published in the LaVergne history.

Ira Knealand Hibbett, son of Joseph Hibbett gave the land for the

LaVergne Presbyterian Church. Joseph's will divided his land between his children and Ira's tract contained the "Ebenezer church lot and Road." From Margaret A. Green's History of the LaVergne Presbyterian Church, "the first building is described as large and wide...a commodious building constructed before the formal organization of the church." The church minutes relate the rebuilding of the church after a devastating tornado in 1914 on the same foundation. The original church was established April 16, 1887. In 1969, the original property was sold and the church relocated on 4 acres of land given by Emmett Waldron at the corner of Cherokee Drive and Hilltop. The new church was dedicated Sept. 10, 1972. The church minutes have been taken to the Tennessee State Library and Archives for microfilming. The foundation of the church is thought to be that of the Ebenezer Methodist Church and that one of its part time preachers was Benjamin Sewell King, husband of Mary Neal King who kept the Diary in 1862.

The Miracle Baptist Church grew out of Mt. View Baptist Church on Sept. 22, 1965. The First Baptist Church of LaVergne Sponsored the new church. Rev. Bob Dowdy was its first pastor. The first worship service was held Oct. 3, 1965, with 75 present in Sunday School and 107 in worship service. By the end of May 1966, 231 were enrolled in Sunday School. Dedication of its new building was held May 5, 1968. The sanctuary seating capacity is about 300. Recently plans were made to build a new sanctuary of greater size. The church faces the Highway #41 in the Miracle Heights Subdivision.

LaVergne Church of Christ dates its existence back to beyond 1856. In a letter dated December 3, 1856, Joshua K. Spears reported

in the Millenial Harbinger that the work of the church in LaVergne was progressing. The first building was near the Davidson County line at Buchanan Springs. The building was used and destroyed by the Union Army. The second meeting house was where the old telephone switchboard was housed. This one burned and since there was such limited space at this location for hitching horses with wagons and buggies, Mr. Billy Goodman offered the ground at its present location. The new building was erected in 1886 nearer the road than its present building. At the turn of the century, the government paid for the destruction of the first building and with the aid of this money, the building was remodeled and moved back to its present site. The church has grown progressively and helps to support a congregation in Kentucky. Jon Gary Williams is currently preaching there. The LaVergne Church of Christ is the oldest continuous congregation in the city--125 years. The property is located on the Old Nashville Highway not too far from the juncture of the highway and Stones River Road. It is a fine red brick structure and has ample parking facilities.

First Baptist Church was organized February 10, 1956 and is now located in Eastwood Subdivision facing the Old Nashville Pike. The first lot was given by Mr. and Mrs. R. M. Baugh and the first building was constructed on Greenwood Drive. Rev. J. V. Braswell was its first pastor. From a very small congregation to one of about 400 members has meant a steady and substantial growth. The building is most attractive and seats about 400 persons. An education building adjoins the sanctuary and Nathan Hale is presently the pastor of the church.

The LaVergne Free Will Baptist Church held its first meeting April 28, 1968 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Macon D. Green on Sandford Road. Rev. D. L. Sharp was its first pastor. The growth of the mission forced the expediency of finding much larger quarters and the church used the LaVergne Civic Auditorium. The church had purchased a lot on Mason Circle and when Sewart Air Base closed, the church bought a building and furniture. The barracks type building has been completely refinished on the inside and bricked on the outside, and it has made a lovely and important addition to the community.

The St. Peter Primitive Baptist Church history was prepared by Mrs. Bertha Peebles and Elder D. J. Carothers, Pastor. The Cumberland Association of Primitive Baptists was organized by the Lynn Creek Primitive Baptist Association in 1880. St. Peter Primitive Baptist Church was first named Stewart Creek Primitive Baptist and was located at Sand Hill. Their first meetings were held in a county schoolhouse in 1896.

In 1918 the church began sponsoring activities to raise money in an effort to erect a church building and land was purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Ben Cartwright. It was located near the Jefferson Pike railroad crossing and at this time the name was changed to St. Peters's. In 1943, Sewart Air Base boundary took the property and the church was moved again. This time it was moved to Sanford Road.

Jefferson Pike Church of God is a relatively new church but it

11. History of the LaVergne Free Will Baptist Church, Charlotte Green

is one of the friendliest. Its first few years of existence found it without a permanent meeting place. It met in a tent for a short while on land owned by Mrs. Cora Mitchell and was located near Sewart Air Base. Later services were held at the intersection of Jefferson Pike and Old Nashville Highway. In December 1962 land was purchased from Paul Waldron and the church is located on Hill View Drive.

There are only two church histories to be compiled for the city, county, and state records. These are St. Paul's Church on Sanford Road and Sand Hill Church of Christ. Mrs. Fannie Belle Paul Taylor has submitted a fine history of Gilroy Church of Christ which is now in Davidson County but was at one time in Rutherford County. Mt. View Baptist Church also in Davidson County has many past and present ties to the LaVergne community. The church will be asked for a church history for the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration.

A history of the LaVergne Schools by Shirlie Chaney was printed in the DAILY NEWS JOURNAL in the early 1960's. Walter King Hoover included a portion of the history in his SMYRNA, THE CHURCH, THE TOWN in addition to some good research of other schools. Several small or one room schools listed were: Rock Springs, Paw Paw, Sinking Creek, Hollandale, Independent Hill, Sanders School, Tipperary, and Blair Schools but it would now be difficult to determine where many more like those might have been. Often school would be held for children in a neighborhood where the teacher/preacher boarded. In the early days of county education, schools could be found on the property of the persons representing school districts. Other schools in the LaVergne area were located on Sanford Knob, the Johnnie Merritt

property, the Will Sutton property, on the Walter Mason farm now inundated by the waters of the Percy Priest Reservoir, on near the old railroad depot, another near the LaVergne Church of Christ. In addition, there was the Allen and Wallace School for Boys, a preparatory school located behind the "Rock Store" now housing the Glass Contractors of Tennessee, Inc. The Women's College located across the street from the Boys school was really more of a finishing School for girls. It became the LaVergne Academy and like others in the county was really an equivalent to a secondary school.

County records do not pre-date 1925, and from that period until 1960 there was a slow steady growth. From the 60's to the present date, the amount of student enrollment has far out-numbered the projected estimates. When the students moved to an 8-room new school on Stones River Road in November 1961, it housed only six grades. At the present time it has 550 enrollment, houses K-5 grades, and is in desperate need of additional space.

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Walter Hoover wrote, "Throughout this era (1850-1920), down the dusty roads, through the wood, across the fields trudged the barefoot children in search of the three R's and a knowledge of history and the world outside their circumscribed farm-bound lives. Soberly clad in dull homespun clothing and carrying their midday meal in a bucket or a basket, they walked the miles to the rude and uncomfortable and poorly equipped one-room schools." These words well describe the limitations the young people had in those days but there is no way of telling how many mental business giants emanated from these

12. SMYRNA, THE CHURCH, THE TOWN, P. 259, Walter Hoover

humble beginnings.

In 1972 the city again was incorporated and Vester Waldron was elected mayor with C. A. Chaney and A. C. Puckett as commissioners. In 1974 Jack Moore and Joe Montgomery were added to the city commissioner offices. Homer Kuykendall is City Manager and Virginia Frizzell is Secretary. The city was preceeded by the Utility District form of government, however, it restricted itself to the acquisition and management of an adequate water supply.

Interchange City has become an Industrial Park off I-24 between Rutherford and Davidson Counties. The land is being developed by Robert McDowell Enterprises and includes several large companies. Emmett Waldron who once owned this land used to say, "Its's a good day, but the best is yet to come!" Francis Roulhac, another previous owner of the land who is buried atop a hill in Interchange City would also agree the best is yet to come.

Time has now come to plan for the nation's second birthday and the LaVergne Bicentennial plans have been set into motion. A census record is being prepared by A. C. Puckett, Jr., Jack Moore with the help of the Rescue Squad: a servicemen's roster is being compiled by the Lion's Club to commemorate all servicemen from LaVergne to serve their country: Old Timers Day and Homecoming is being planned by Mayor Waldron and his large committee: a parade is scheduled for July 1976 with Joe Montgomery and Charles Talley serving as chairmen: a city park is being planned to provide ample recreation facilities for the youth of the community: the city's churches are to be hon-

ored by having date markers placed at each church: the business community will have plans for participation in this program with Jim Bowles of Firestone as chariman. The Men's Club and Home Demonstration Club will plan the 1976 Bicentennial ceremonies.

Victor DeLaVergne, a family descendant and attorney from New Orleans is to send the city a tree brought from France for the Bicentennial Celebration. It will be suggested the city plant a Magnolia tree in its park every August 23 to commemorate Roulhac and LaVergne's past, and its promise of a bright future.