

William Nelson, Early Settler of Northeast Tennessee and his Contribution to Methodism in Tennessee

William Nelson was born circa 1745 in northern Virginia and migrated to Washington County, North Carolina (present-day Tennessee) prior to 1778. It was during that year that he was listed on the first tax list of the county, and he purchased property from Jacob Brown on the Nolichucky River. It is evident that some of Nelson's relatives migrated here at the same time, as an Elijah Nelson also purchased property from Jacob Brown. Other Nelsons in the early deeds include Henry, John and Southy who all made purchases prior to 1800.

| Persons Names | Amt. of their Estates | Amt. to pay |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Amount Bro. Paid | £1157 1/8 | |
| David McLeod | 254.0.0 | |
| James Randel | 114.9.0 | |
| Francis Hamilton | 100.0.0 | |
| George Kari | 100.0.0 | |
| William Nelson | 240.0.0 | |
| Bartholomew Woods | 232.0.0 | |
| William Chambers | 100.0.0 | |
| | | £1179 5/8 |

Washington County's 1778 tax list showing William Nelson.

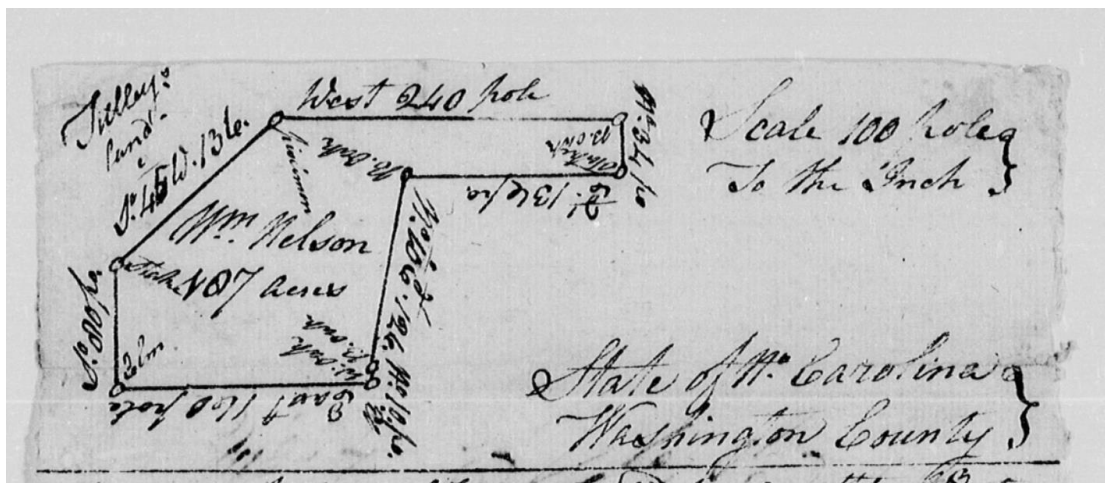
old book
A
page 69

This Indenture made this twentieth day November in the year of our Lord Christ one thousand seven hundred and seventy Eight Between Jacob Brown of the one part and William Nelson of the other part Witnesseth that the said Jacob Brown for and in consideration of the sum of one hundred pounds to him in hand paid before the Signing and Delivery of these presents the receipt whereof the said Jacob Brown doth hereby acknowledge

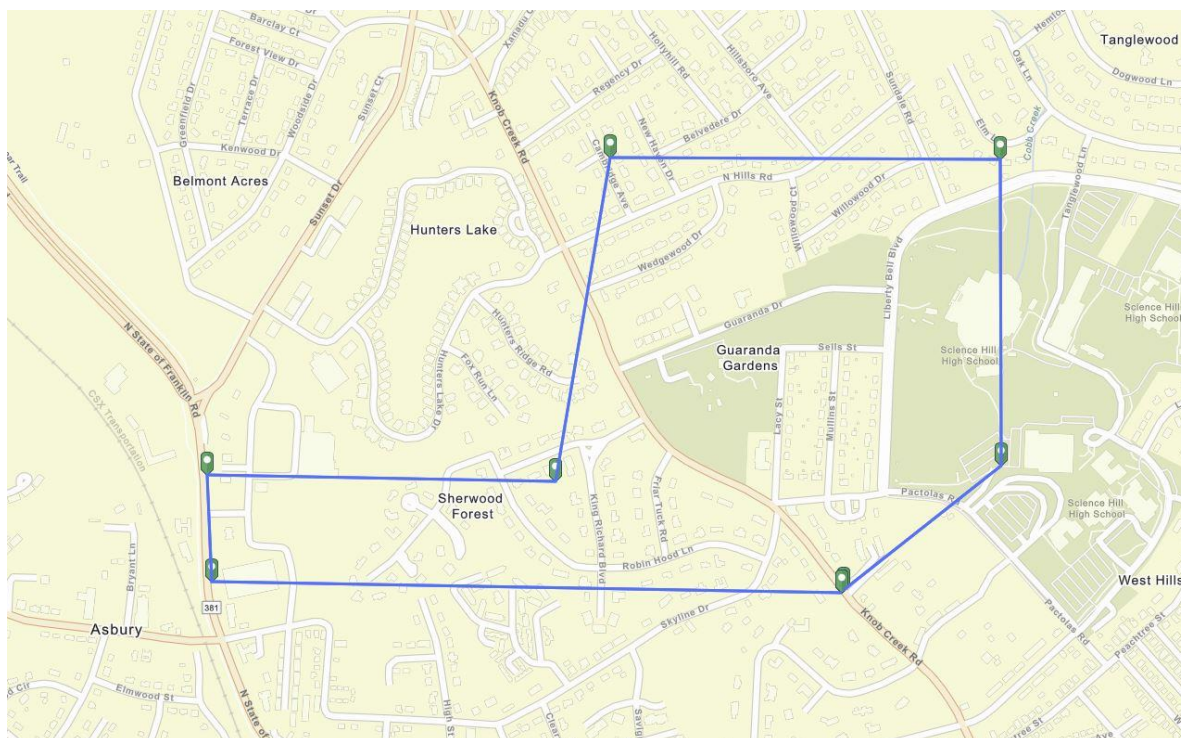
Jacob Brown to William Nelson, 1778, property (acreage not given) on the north side of the Nolichucky River. (Deed Book A, page 100)

William Nelson eventually purchased more property and was the recipient of two North Carolina land grants, # 1032 being in present-day Johnson City, Tennessee. Methodist Bishop, Francis Asbury, preached his first sermon in the Washington County area at Nelson's home. He held annual conferences here in 1793, 1796 and 1797 and called Nelson's home, "an ancient home of Methodists and Methodist preaching."

In November 1792, Nelson obtained North Carolina Land Grant #1032 for 187 acres of land, bounded by "other land of his own" as well of land owned by Benjamin Cobb and Jonathan Tulley.

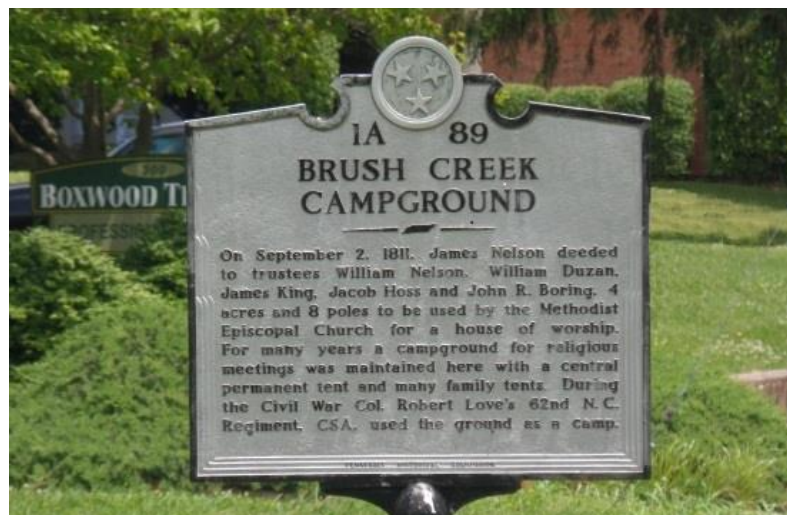


This is a scan of the original survey of the property. When compared to the image below, you will notice that the drawing is "upside down." This is because the surveyor used the available paper and sketched the image to fit within the bounds. Nelson made entry on 03 Apr 1780. The deed was not registered until 1792...12 years later!



North Carolina Land Grant #1032, 27 Nov 1792, Deed Book E, page 90 for 187 acres
"...on the waters of Nobb Creek..."

In 1811, James Nelson deeded to trustees William Nelson, William Duzan, James King, Jacob Hoss and John R. Boring property to be used by the Methodist Church as a place of worship. This property was eventually called, "Brush Creek Campground." The Methodist Church used this property for many years as a meeting place for campground services. A historical marker stands in Johnson City, Tennessee marking the location.



This marker is located at corner of Jackson St. and Watauga Avenue in Johnson City.

Inscription:

"On September 2, 1811, James Nelson deeded to trustees William Nelson, William Duzan, James King, Jacob Hoss and John R. Boring, 4 acres and 8 poles to be used by the Methodist Episcopal Church for a house of worship. For many years a campground for religious meetings was maintained here with a central permanent tent and many family tents. During the Civil War Col. Robert Love's 62nd N.C. Regiment, CSA, used the ground as a camp."

In 1812, William Nelson began to sell off some of his property to Richard Carr. This continued until Nelson's death, at which time, the administrator's again sold property to Carr, whose descendants owned the property for many years.

William Nelson wrote his will in 1824. He died sometime prior to 13 Jul 1829 when the will was proven in court by the administrators, William, Jr. and Mark Nelson. There are several documents in the Washington County, Tennessee Archives that relate to William Nelson, including case files (Judicial and Superior Courts), his original will and an estate file, containing the inventory of his estate.

A Tennessee State Historical Marker once stood at the intersection of Knob Creek Road and West Market Street in Johnson City, but was removed for road work. The inscription: "WILLIAM NELSON HOME: 1 mi. N. was the home of William Nelson. A native of Virginia, he was one of the earliest settlers in this region and served in the Revolutionary War. Francis Asbury, early Methodist bishop, held annual conferences here in 1793, 1796, and 1797. Asbury called Nelson's house "An ancient home of Methodists and Methodist preaching."