

**INTRODUCTION TO MOUNT VERNON  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH CEMETERY**  
Doughty Chapel Road

Although the Mount Vernon Cemetery lies just behind the Church, the two are only connected by geography. There were apparently two different deeds; one to establish a Church (1897) and a second deed to separate the Cemetery. The Church was active until a few years ago. There are an unknown number of unmarked graves in this cemetery. A search of funeral home records and death certificates identified a number of those. There is little doubt the origination of this Cemetery was the Family Graveyard of the Captain Peter Harmon (1785-1870) Family. The earliest graves date from the 1860s and all are Harmon family members. The Cemetery is called "Harmon's" in early 20th Century Death Certificates.

Captain Peter Harmon was a War of 1812 Soldier. His original tombstone had broken into shattered pieces and lay on the ground at the time of the cemetery survey. A new Military Headstone was ordered from the Veteran Affairs Office and placed by his local descendants in 2016. Captain Peter Harmon was the son of John Harmon (1750-1838), a Revolutionary War Soldier, whose memorial military marker was placed a few years earlier at nearby Kidwell Cemetery in 2012.

The former Greene County Historian, Mr. T. Elmer Cox (1907-1995), wrote a brief history on the Mount Vernon Church and Cemetery:  
Mount Vernon United Methodist Church  
Organized: 1897  
Present Minister: The Reverend Harry E. Thomas

Mount Vernon United Methodist Church is located two miles northwest of Greeneville on a crossroad connecting the Baileyton and Rogersville Pikes. The church was built on a site adjacent to an older graveyard called Harmon's. The deed to the property can be found in Greene County Deed Book 64, page 110 and reads as follows:

“For and in consideration of ten dollars ... we, James H. Anderson and wife Rebecca Anderson, have this day bargained and sold ... to the Methodist Episcopal Church and to the trustees of the said church and to the trustees to hereafter be appointed and their legal successors in office forever the following real estate to wit: A certain tract of land situated and lying in the 12<sup>th</sup> Civil District of Greene County, Tennessee and having the following writes and bounds beginning at the northwest corner of the Harmon Graveyard thence 10 feet west to a rock, thence about North 8 poles to a rock, thence nearly south 10 poles to a rock in the graveyard line, thence with the graveyard line to the place of beginning and containing one acre, more or less. To have and to hold to the said ME church and its said trustees and their lawful successors and assigns forever, this property to be used for church and school purposes with consent of the said trustees.” Witness our hand and seal this January 7, 1897.

James H. Anderson

Rebecca Anderson”

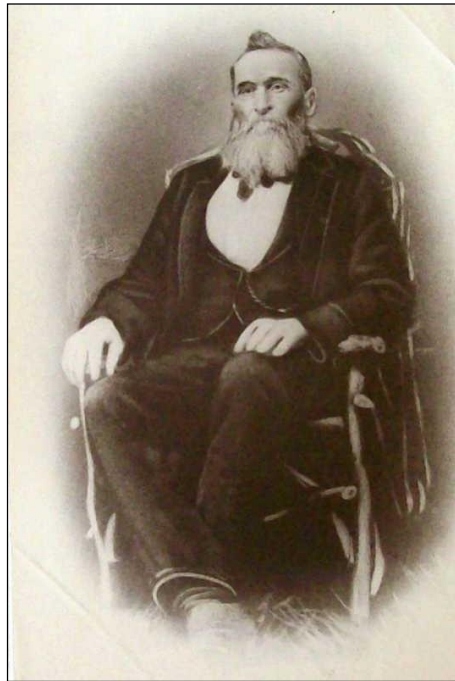
*(1834-1902, buried Anderson Cemetery with 1<sup>st</sup> wife, Elizabeth Casteel, 1827-1890)*

T. Elmer Cox, added:

"James Hardin Anderson, nicknamed Duffy, who furnished the land for the church site, was a miller by trade and operated a stone-bur water ground grist mill on the creek just below the church."

The oldest legible markers in the graveyard are for children, W. A. Harmon who died August 1, 1867 and Elender Harmon who died on January 5, 1861. The most famous tombstone is that of Captain Peter Harmon, April 18, 1785 – August 13, 1870. Captain Harmon was a veteran of the War of 1812. He married Elizabeth Bowman, whose father Sparling Bowman, was also a Revolutionary war Veteran. (*Sparling Bowman 1752-1839, buried Zion Presbyterian.*) Captain Peter Harmon and Betsy had seven sons in the Union Army in the Civil War."

Regarding the seven Civil War Harmon brothers mentioned by T. Elmer Cox, six can be identified as serving with the 4<sup>th</sup> TN Infantry Company A. These brothers were John B. Harmon (1820-1900) who is buried in nearby Kidwell Cemetery; Kennady B. Harmon who died during the War; Thomas J. Harmon (1830-1905) who is buried in Cross Anchor; William R. Harmon (1823-1897) who is buried in Bent Creek Cemetery in Whitesburg (Hamblen County); and Sparling B. Harmon (1826-post 1900) and Robert Lee Harmon (1835-1900), both of whom are buried here.



Sparling Bowman Harmon  
4th TN Infantry, Company A, Union

Altogether 24 persons of the Harmon surname are known to be interred in the graveyard. The next most numerous surname is that of Hope. The Hope family intermarried with the Harmon family.

Another surname connected with this church is that of Bohannon, who were also intermarried with the Harmon family. The first one, Simeon/Simon Bohannon and his wife, Edy/Edie Grear/Greer Bohannon, migrated here in the 1850's from the North Wilksboro area of North Carolina. Simeon was a potter by trade and for a period of time operated the old Harmon Pottery, near the cemetery. (Simon (1808-1869) and Edie (1807-1886) Bohannon and their sons Simon Bohannon Junior (1849-1876) and John Bohannon (1836-1895) are all buried at New Bethel Presbyterian.) The well-known Greenevilleian, John (S. P.) Bohannon is buried here, as is his father, William Thomas Bohannon, also a Union Civil War soldier.



William Thomas Bohannon, Corporal 119th IL Infantry, Union and Family

Among the longest-lived persons buried here is Mary M. "Aunt Polly" Pickering Harmon (1840-1928). She was the wife of Civil War Soldier Robert Lee Harmon (1835-1900).



In 1927, the local newspaper paid tribute to Aunt Polly:

## MARY M. "AUNT POLLY" PICKERING HARMON

Contributed by Glenna Casteel

*Greeneville Democrat-Sun* March 4, 1927

"For Women To Do Men's Work Is Not New, Says Aunt Polly Harmon"

"This thing of women doing men's work is not new," said Aunt Polly Harmon, eighty-seven year old Greene Countian, "I've done many a day's work as hard as any man, cutting wheat, cutting and hauling logs, harnessing teams and hauling, and shearing sheep. I bet there is not a man in the county could out work me when I was a little younger." Mrs. Harmon is no idler now. Although when other people of her age are sitting back in rocking chairs, many of them unable to so much as walk across the floor, she does the cooking and housekeeping for a family of three, and on occasions gets up a most delicious company dinner with cake and pie and custard and all sorts of extras. She is the only woman in the household, but she says her grandsons, Bruce and Percy Harmon whom she raised from infancy, are excellent help. She is training them to make two good husbands.

Mrs. Harmon is a most remarkable woman. She has had good health all her life, up to this winter, when she has suffered some from rheumatism, and is as active and attractive and bright as she was fifty years ago. Her life reads almost like a romance, as she sat in her home 4 miles west of town on the Baileyton Pike, just a stone's throw from the spot on which she was housekeeping seventy-three years ago, and talked about the past, her vivid face lit up with memories and she bridled and blushed as if those long dead days of courtship were only yesterday.

A member of the well known Pickering family of Greene County, Mrs. Harmon was born at Fullen's Station (now Chuckey), on March 6, 1839 [*tombstone, 1840*]. She was a merry, happy child, but disaster overtook her early life, as both parents died when she was eight years old, and she was then sent from pillar to post. She was shifted around among the various relatives. Two of her sisters married Greene County brothers, Cutler [*married Judith "Juda" Pickering*] and Thomas Harmon [*married Hannah Pickering*], and she came to stay for awhile with one of them. She was a slender dark eyed girl with abundant curling black hair, which she wore loose around her face. At that time she was just a child. The Harmon brothers who were her brothers-in-law, had a younger brother, Robert, a fine looking young fellow, who was strongly attracted to the shy little girl, and as for her, "I liked him the first time I laid eyes on him," said the old lady, her bright brown eyes tender with long forgotten sweetness, the stalwart figure of her youthful sweetheart standing before her minds eye. She had no home, and he had no money, however, in October before she became fifteen in March they decided to cast their lots together. They had no place to go, the young twenty-one year old husband fixed up an

old blacksmith shop on the place. "It really looked like a house," said the bride of long ago, with pardonable pride. "We had a bed and a table and two chairs." When asked if she had a cook stove, Aunt Polly laughed heartily, "Why, no child," she said, "stoves had never been heard of in those days. I had some pots and kettles I hung over the fire."

All went well for a time, then the cannon of war roared, and the little home was broken up while Robert Harmon went to join the Union forces [*Company A, 4th TN Infantry*]. The young wife, still little more than a girl, had three small children on her hands, no husband, and no money [*text missing*] must feed her flock. With the dauntless [*text missing*] characterized the women of that day, she took up her burden and carried it right well and faithfully. She could not plow, but she could shear sheep, wash and comb the wool, spin it, and weave it into cloth. This she did at night, exchanging the cloth with a neighboring family so that the boy would come and plow her fields. Then she planted and harvested them. The youngest child was only a baby, and she would carry a quilt and place the sleeping baby on it, while the others played around it.

One day her husband came home on a furlough. While he was here his company was captured by the Confederates, and a regiment of Confederates encamped here around Dobson's Springs. He had to go into hiding and for two months stayed in a cave "over on the ridge." When Mrs. Harmon went to milk she would secret a basket of goods for the prisoner at the spring, and he would come out at night and get it. He never got back to the army until there was an exchange of prisoners, and his wife was in constant terror lest he be captured.

Twelve children were born to the couple, all of whom lived to be grown. Those now living are Messrs. S. T. Harmon, Andy Harmon, James A. Harmon, Franklin Harmon, and George B. Harmon of Greene County, and Robert P. Harmon of Asheville. Mrs. Add's Thomas, Mrs. Sallie Morrison, Mr. Simon Harmon, Mr. Joseph Harmon, and Mr. William P. Harmon are dead. The youngest was nineteen years old before there was a death in the family. Every member of the family but one was musical, and could play different instruments. Their father played the fife in the army and the fiddle at home. Their grandmother, Mrs. Peter Harmon (Miss Betsy Bowman) was a musician and used to play the violin and taught her boys to dance according to report.

Although Aunt Polly was almost blind for seven years, being able to see only at night and having to sit in a darkened room by day, she can now see to read without glasses. When asked how she liked new fangled things like cars and movies, she said she rode in automobiles, but she was always afraid, sitting on the edge of the seat, and she wouldn't give Old Jule and the buggy for all of them. She drove Old Jule for thirty years, and she was a real workhorse. She had never been to the movies but once and that was when her

daughter-in-law told her she was going in a store to “trade.” “This is a funny store,” said Aunt Polly. “They don’t seem to have any goods in here, and what a lot of chairs for the customers.” She sat down and the next minute pictures were being flashed on the screen. A mischievous twinkle shone in the old lady’s eyes as she said, “I didn’t shut my eyes, but I don’t think it’s right to look at ‘em.”

She is a member of the Methodist church, and brought up her large family under the principle “To spare the rod is to spoil the child.” She says her children were always good children. She has fifty-two grandchildren, sixty-eight great grandchildren and two great great-grandchildren, these being Eva McAmis, daughter of Mrs. Mildred McAmis and Frankie Cox, child of Mrs. Stella Cox.

Surrounded with nearly two hundred descendants she is spending the evening of her life on the spot where she went to live after five years in the reclaimed blacksmith shop. On the wall is a clock that has been keeping time for 115 years. Far from being inactive, she does each day what would be considered a good day’s work for a woman sixty-five years younger than she, and is as interested in what goes on in the world as if she were right in it.

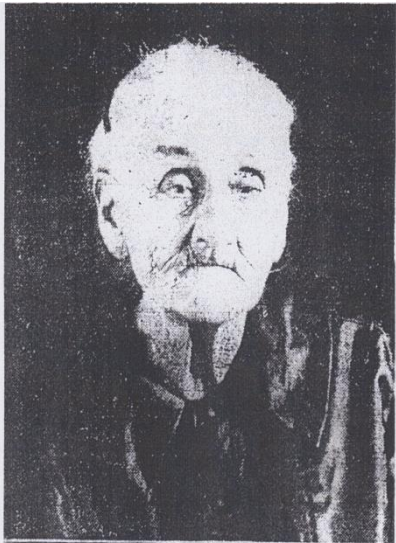
“I couldn’t get along without Greene County’s daily paper,” said Aunt Polly. It makes me feel so lonesome and blue when the mail man goes by without leaving it. I always read the deaths first. That is what interests me most, but I don’t miss a word in it. I like to know what is going on in the world.” When asked how long she wanted to live she replied just as long as the Lord wanted her to. She said she was ready to go any time, but, here she said with her bright smile the vividness of her delightful personality shown forth as if she were a right young woman, “I am having a pretty good time in this old world.”

*Greenville Democrat-Sun*    March 17, 1927  
Mrs. Mary Pickering Harmon Celebrates Her 87<sup>th</sup> Birthday

One of the best birthday presents received yesterday by Mrs. Mary Pickering Harmon on the occasion of her eighty-seventh birthday was the most perfect and ideal spring day. All nature seemed to conspire to make her birthday beautiful. The sun was as warm and bright as if it were May; peach, pear, and cherry trees in full and radiant blossom, made the countryside lovely. All spring flowers were in full bloom, and hardly a breath of air fanned the tree tops as her friends and relatives gathered at her home three miles west of Greenville to wish her well and congratulate her on attaining the ripe old age of eighty-seven. The plans for the day were kept from the honor guest, and she was surprised to see car after car come to the house, laden with loving friends. At noon a long table was spread in front of the old home laden with all the delicious viands for which Greene

Countians are famous. The place of honor was occupied with a great white cake, baked by Mrs. Robert Harmon and Mrs. Bose Harmon, on which were placed eighty-seven pink candles. After thanks had been returned by Mr. J.R. Smelcer, the feast was enjoyed. "Aunt Polly," as she is lovingly known by all her friends as well as relatives, sat in the center of the throng surrounded by her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and even great-great grandchildren, of which there are two, smiling and merry. She enjoyed the tempting menu as much as anyone, and exchanged jokes and merriment with all her guests. She instantly recognized everyone as they came in, and was the gayest one at the party. She received a number of lovely presents and many good wishes.

"Aunt Polly" Harmon is one of Greene County's oldest citizens. She was born at Chuckey (then Fullen's Station) on March 16, 1840, and was a sister of the late Captain Levi Pickering. Having [text missing] through the evolution of ox-carts, wagons, buggies, carriages, and finally automobiles. She is able to read without glasses, and is in possession of all of her faculties. Not only is she active and useful, but does the work of a young woman, keeping house and doing the cooking for her sons and two grandsons. She is a woman of the finest and best type, a Greene County heroine. When her birthday cake was placed on her lap, she blew out the eighty-seven candles in eleven breaths. Then, laughing merrily, told the guests that she would live eleven more years. The many people in the county who love "Aunt Polly" very dearly sincerely hope that she will.



Mary M. "Polly" Pickering Harmon

#### Postscript

Aunt Polly Harmon died the following year, on November 23, 1928, at the age of 88. Aunt Polly's husband, Robert L. Harmon, was born August 28, 1835, and died August 29, 1900 at the age of 65. Robert was one of six brothers confirmed to have served in Company A, 4th TN Infantry, Union. Robert's rank was "Private and Musician". Five of the six brothers survived the War. Brother, Kennedy Harmon, died as a Prisoner of War at Andersonville, Georgia. They were sons of Capt. Peter Harmon, War of 1812 who is buried at "Harmon's Cemetery".

