



**Know your county**  
Barbara McRae  
Columnist

## Brownlow found big stage for his vitriol

William Gannaway Brownlow was a Virginia carpenter who entered the Methodist ministry and developed his natural gifts for leadership, preaching, and writing. He attended the annual meeting of the Holston Conference of the Methodist Church in Abingdon, Va., in Fall 1826, and was admitted to the traveling ministry as a “circuit rider” by Bishop Joshua Soule.

During his first assignment, he developed a distaste for Baptists that later led to a bitter fight with Rev. Humphrey Posey, a renowned Baptist missionary who served the Franklin Baptist Church. (Last week’s column covered that dispute.) His biographers say that Brownlow developed an immediate dislike of such practices as foot washing.

He also had run-ins with Presbyterians. He later recalled that, as a circuit preacher in Maryville, Tenn., a young Presbyterian missionary followed him around, taunting him with Calvinistic criticisms of Methodism. If he took the taunts silently, it was the only time in his life that he did so.

Brownlow came to Macon County as pastor of the Franklin circuit in 1832. I doubt if any more controversial character ever walked on Macon County soil.

After leaving here, he went to Tennessee, no doubt seeking a larger stage for his flamboyant personality. He became a preacher in Jonesboro, editor of “The Whig,” and an outspoken defender of slavery. The peculiar institution, he wrote, would not be abolished until “the angel Gabriel sounds the last loud trump of God.” His newspaper portrayed Harriet Beecher Stowe (author of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”) as “a deliberate liar” and “ugly as Original sin.”

After secession, Brownlow underwent a drastic change. He turned against the Confederacy, using all the power of his vitriolic pen to condemn it. In October 1861 he was arrested and sent north. Authorities shut down his newspaper.

When Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside occupied Knoxville two years later, Brownlow returned as an outspoken defender of emancipation. He openly advocated reprisals against pro-Confederate Southerners. In 1863 he wrote that he would arm “every wolf, panther, catamount, and bear in the mountains of America... every rattle-snake and crocodile... every devil in Hell, and turn them loose upon the Confederacy.”

Whatever motivated Brownlow’s remarkable conversion, he was not alone. Other mountain people shared his pro-Union sentiments, particularly in Tennessee. In a statewide, popular referendum held to show support for the Confederacy, East Tennesseans voted two-to-one to remain in the Union. Some 31,000 white Tennesseans eventually joined the Union army.

Brownlow’s pen surely fomented some of the pro-Union activity, and may even have inspired the five Kirk boys of Greene County, Tenn., to join the U.S. Army. One of them, George, enlisted in 1862. Two years later, he was authorized to organize the 3rd NC Mounted Infantry. His regiment conducted raids in Western North Carolina with the intent of driving a wedge in a region that was already somewhat divided in its loyalties.

Kirk viewed Macon County as a hotbed of Confederacy and was on his way here to punish the rebels when word came that the war had ended. The final surrender of Confederate forces in the state took place here, at Dixie Hall, which stood near the present courthouse.

Brownlow went on to greater things after the end of hostilities. He became Governor of Tennessee and a U.S. Senator before resuming his newspaper career. He died in 1877.

## Panthers marching to beat of new drums



Press photo/Carter Giegerich

Drum majors Jared Ross and Madison Tallent were elated when they learned they had a “new” drum set.

**Carter Giegerich**  
reporter@thefranklinpress.com

The Franklin High School Marching Panther Regiment Band drum line will be stepping in style this year thanks to a big donation from a band parent.

Vickie Kimsey, whose son is on the drum line, donated a full marching band drum line set to the school so the band will no longer be marching with cumbersome, outdated gear. “I knew that the only way the band is going to grow is to have a bigger vision, so I decided to invest in something that’s important to my son and something that’s important to me,” Kimsey said. “I was in band, and I know how it laid such a good foundation for my future. I was in Spirit of America in high school, and I toured Europe, and I just believe in what the band can do because of that.”

The new drum set is made by Yamaha, and Buddy Huckabee, band director at FHS, said it will be a major upgrade over the aging Mapex drums the band has been using for around 10 years now. Many of the old drums are deteriorating, he said, and while the band has taken steps to keep the old equipment in working order, it still has many concerns that would need to be addressed eventually.

“It has normal wear and tear on it, and fortunately the kids always take pride in their equipment so it is well taken care of,” Huckabee said. “The only downfall we had with the older drums is that with a less expensive brand, the sound and functionality (and repairs) can be costly. We budget about \$1,200 to replace the drum heads every year on the Mapex drums.”

The older set will still see some use, he said, as backup gear or for when inclement weather might damage the newer drums. By rotating them, both sets of equipment will see longer lifespans.

Reagan Kimsey, Vickie Kimsey’s son, found the new gear online through a Facebook group. The drums were in good condition, and had been previously owned by a world-touring marching band that used them in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. Most importantly, Reagan Kimsey said, the price was right.

“Finding this in this good condition is unparalleled,” he said. “If we wanted to get this new it would cost nearly \$15,000. We got it for close to \$4,000.”

The new drums come with brackets and harnesses for all the pieces, which percussion coordi-



Press photo/Carter Giegerich

Band members cheered when the new drums were unveiled at band camp.



Photo submitted

The drum line has been playing the same instruments for about 10 years.

nator Daniel Ball said will be a major benefit for the students in the marching band. Ball said the new gear would be more comfortable and more reliable than the old gear, and will allow them to bring more students into the band program.

“I’d fix one and put it on and jump, and it would be fine but then you’d take another step and it would fall off,” he said. “It allows us to expand the drum line and, if we have more people interested, it allows us to give them a chance to march and experience it as well.”

This contribution was especially meaningful for the band as there is often a shortage of funding for new equipment and instruments that needs to be supplemented by stu-

dent and parent-run fundraisers. The band relies heavily on these fundraisers and the support of the band booster parent organization to meet their needs for instruments and gear that can cost anywhere from \$2,000 to \$12,000. There are also sometimes unique situations that necessitate assistance from the county, but Huckabee said the school community is responsible for the majority of the financial support for the band.

“When we are in desperate need of anything, our county and community usually come through to help us,” he said. “Since the downfall of the economy in 2008, we get tremendous support from our county in other means, but there is just not an allotment readily available any

more for the purchasing and funding for band equipment as in the past.”

The new gear was welcomed by cheers from the band when Huckabee and Vickie Kimsey revealed the drum line to students during the school’s annual band camp. Reagan Kimsey said the drum line would be feeling the benefits of the upgrade right away.

“You have no idea – the old stuff, the harnesses hurt, we all had a lot of back pain,” he said. “The basses and the tenors are going to be lighter. The snares might be a little heavier but they’re snare drums, so they aren’t as heavy to begin with.”

The band will use the new gear at their first home football game, on Friday against Murphy High School.



Press photo/Carter Giegerich

Beckie McMahan, left, Vickie Kimsey, Buddy Huckabee and Jennifer Huckabee pose in front of the Marching Panther Regiment Band trailer used to haul instruments and equipment.



Submitted photo

The instruments required to keep the band playing cost anywhere from \$2,000 to \$12,000. The band relies heavily on booster fundraising.