

Hill, Green, Jr. ^[1]

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3 Nov. 1741–11 Sept. 1826

Green Hill, Jr., pioneer [Methodist](#) ^[2] minister, Revolutionary patriot, planter, and public servant, was born in [Granville](#) ^[3] (later Bute) County, the son of Grace Bennett and Green Hill. His father, a member of the established church, was appointed to the vestry of the Parish of St. George in 1758; little else is known of him except that he was a farmer and landowner of substantial means. His maternal grandfather, William Bennett, resident of [Northampton County](#) ^[4], was captain of the Roanoke Company of 101 Men, Northampton Regiment, colonial militia, in 1748. U.S. Senator Augustus Hill Garland, of Arkansas, who was attorney general in the cabinet of President Grover Cleveland, was a descendant of Hill's brother, William.

No accounts are known to exist of Hill's childhood, and there is no record of the extent and manner of his formal education. He was a member, along with his brothers William and Henry, of Blandford-Bute [Masonic Lodge](#) ^[5]. Hill was a delegate from [Bute County](#) ^[6] to the colonial Assembly at New Bern on 25 Aug. 1774, to the Assembly at New Bern on 3 Apr. 1775, and to the Second [Provincial Congress](#) ^[7] in Hillsborough beginning 21 Aug. 1775. At the Halifax Congress of 4 Apr. 1776, where he represented Bute, he was named second major of the Bute militia regiment. On 11 Jan. 1777 he was appointed a justice of the court (equivalent to the modern magistrate) for Bute County. In the same year Hill represented his county in the first session of the state legislature at New Bern. When Bute was split in 1779 to form [Franklin](#) ^[8] and [Warren](#) ^[9] counties, he and his brother William were two of the four witnesses to the deed recording the purchase of the 100 acres of land for the new county seat, Louisburg. He also served as a land proccessioner (a kind of surveyor) for the Franklin County [Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions](#) ^[10].

In 1781 Hill enlisted as chaplain of the Tenth Regiment, Sharp's Company, and saw service that year as far west as Salisbury, when American armies were retreating. In 1783 he was elected treasurer for the District of Halifax; he was also elected one of the councillors of state, a position he held until 1786. In December 1785 he became clerk of the [Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions](#) ^[10] for Franklin County and was named to a fourman committee to see that a bridge was built across the Tar River at Louisburg. In 1786 he built and began to operate a [gristmill](#) ^[11] at Massie's Falls on the Tar River. A legislative committee, assigned in 1789 to report on an alleged shortage of funds under his management, found instead that Hill, as Halifax district treasurer, was due a reimbursement of 233 pounds, 13 shillings, and sixpence, which the Assembly paid him.

Sometime in the early 1770s, Hill became interested in the Protestant religious movement known as [Methodism](#) ^[2]. Bishop [Francis Asbury](#) ^[12] preached to "about 400 souls" at Hill's home on 9 July 1780. Clergy present at the Ellis' Preaching-House conference in Virginia voted on 30 Apr. 1784 to meet three times in 1785, "the first at Green Hill's (North Carolina) Friday 29th and Saturday 30th of April." This gathering, the first conference of the Methodist church ever held in North Carolina, actually took place on 20 Apr. 1785. It was also the first Annual Conference of the new Methodist Episcopal church since its formal organization in December 1784, thus, the first conference of the organized Methodist church ever held in the United States. Although at the time Hill was merely a local preacher, at this session at his home Methodist historian Jesse Lee was "admitted into full connexion" of the ministry. Lee, prior to then had worked for a number of years as an overseer on the Halifax plantation of Colonel Gabriel Long. Hill was the brother-in-law of the English scholar, preacher, and physician, Dr. John King, who had come to America to establish Wesleyan societies. King had preached the first Methodist sermon in Baltimore before moving southward in 1780 to Louisburg. Hill is said to have been the first native son of North Carolina to become a Methodist preacher.

Other conferences were held at Hill's home near Louisburg in January 1790, December 1791, and December 1794. Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury described in his journal, dated 19 Jan. 1792, his visit to the home of Green Hill, whom he ordained as a deacon on 21 January.

In 1796 Hill crossed the Alleghenies, moving westward and preaching along the way. He was not, however, one of many North Carolinians who were granted land in Tennessee, then still part of North Carolina, on account of distinguished service in the Revolutionary War. He moved his family to Tennessee in 1799 and settled about 12 miles south of Nashville, where he built a home, called Liberty Hill, which was in some ways a duplicate of the house he had left behind in Franklin County. There, in 1808, met the Western Conference of the Methodist church, which included the states of Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and all territory west of the Mississippi River. Hill was ordained an elder on 4 Oct. 1813 by Bishop William McKendree.

Hill was married twice, first on 13 Oct. 1763 to Nancy Thomas. Their children were Jordan, who became a state legislator and sheriff of Franklin County; Hannah, who married Thomas Stokes of [Chatham County](#) ^[13]; Nancy, who married Thomas Knibb Wynn of North Carolina; Martha, who married Jesse Brown of North Carolina; and Richard, who died in infancy.

Nancy Thomas Hill died on 16 Jan. 1772, and on 3 June 1773 Hill married Mary Seawell, daughter of Benjamin Seawell^[14] of old Bute County. The children of this second marriage were Green Hill III (trustee of Franklin Academy when it was chartered by the legislature in 1802 and trustee board clerk when it opened in 1805), who married Mary Long, daughter of Colonel Gabriel and Sarah Richmond Long; Lucy, who married the Reverend Joshua Cannon; John; Thomas; Sally Hicks, who never married; Mary Seawell, who married Adam de Graffenreid of Tennessee; William; and Joshua C., who married Lemiza Lanier of Beaufort County^[15].

Green Hill, Jr. was also the recorded enslaver of various people throughout his life. According to the 1790 Census, Hill was listed as the enslaver of 14 people. The number of people he enslaved by the last census before his death, 1820, was 13.

Hill died and was buried at Liberty Hill, his home in Tennessee. His old home in Louisburg, where the Methodist conferences were held, still stands and is occupied by descendants of his brother, William. The poet and novelist Edwin Wiley Fuller^[16] was buried there in a family cemetery. The country club and the city cemetery in Louisburg both are named for Hill. The library of Vanderbilt University has some of his books.

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