

COOKEVILLE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL CLASS PHOTOS RECOVERED

COOKEVILLE — Several official Cookeville Central High School class photos are now safe at the Putnam County Archives thanks to some former students who saved these pieces of history from being thrown away.



It began with a visit to the archives by Mary Frances Huddleston Bailey, a graduate of Cookeville Central High School. She mentioned to archivist Glenn Jones that she possessed the official framed photo of her class of 1944 that had hung in the school's hallway.

(Pictured: Jack Freeman and Velma Peek stand with the senior photos they rescued and have donated to the

Putnam County Archives. Photo by Ty Kernea – Herald-Citizen).

“She told me that she was told that all the class pictures were being thrown away,” Jones said, “and one of the people at the school saved the 1944 picture for her because they knew she loved history and that was her class.”

Several months after Bailey donated the class of 1944 photo, a visitor to the archives told Jones about a woman named Thelma King Cunningham who also had several similar class photos before she passed away. Jones got in touch with her twin sister, Velma King Peek, who revealed that she had the photo of the 1959 class.

“A good friend that worked at the junior high, the old central high school building, saw our pictures in the 1959 framed class picture, and she saved it for us,” Peek said. “When we got to the school there were five or six class pictures still leaning up against the wall. She gave us the six because they were throwing them away, too. ... My family was hurt that officials of the school system did not care about the history of Cookeville High School, and would carelessly discard pictures of the very people who helped make Cookeville a great place to live.”

When her sister passed away, Peek and her family gave most of the photos to people who were in those classes. After hearing how the 1944 class photo was in the Putnam County Archives, she decided to donate her 1959 class photo as well. She also contacted her friend, Jack Freeman, who she knew owned the photo of the class of 1957. Freeman decided to donate his photo to the archives as well.

“I am so impressed with the archives and veterans hall,” Freeman said. “I had no idea it was this grand. I am privileged to add this class picture to the archives, so it can be preserved for all time.”

Anyone who might be holding on to old class photos from Cookeville Central High School and would be interested in donating those to the Putnam County Archives for preservation, can call the office at 931-520-0042 or come by the archives at 121 B South Dixie Ave. — underneath the county clerk office.

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*Read more about the History of Putnam Co., TN, surrounding areas and ‘Schoolyard Tales’ at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>