

DOLL MUSEUM TO OPEN IN PATTON HOUSE SATURDAY

Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN

*Read more about the History of Putnam Co., TN at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>

It was a labor of love as those who will be visiting the Patton House Museum, featuring the Velma Thompson Doll Collection, will see as Putnam County's newest museum formally opens to the public next weekend.

"All of these dolls represent a period of time in our history," Melinda Swann said of the collection.

It's been a long road, but one that has paid off for everyone involved and has gotten a number of people excited about the project.



The museum, nicknamed The Doll House, is set up at the house of Maurine Patton and features more than 2,000 dolls and doll furniture. It's a place to reminisce, as there are old Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls, First Lady dolls, Barbie dolls -- even a Barbie doll wedding party -- and dolls from all over the world -- from China, Scotland, Argentina and many others.

(Pictured: Scarlett O'Hara and other characters from a Southern classic, "Gone With the Wind," are on display).

"People brought her dolls from their different travels," Swann said. "She became a researcher of dolls and also was a 'doll doctor.' She'd research a doll's origins and fix any broken dolls brought to her."

Swann spent a lot of time over the past 10 years with Thompson, who was like a family member to her, before her death last October.

Thompson's house -- which is featured in a little model just inside the museum -- is located just outside the downtown Cookeville district. Those who visited her house would see the quilts lining the stairwell, but upstairs was a different story.

"It was like having a fabric and notions department in the upstairs part of her house," Swann recalled. "She taught me a love for quilting."

Her love of quilting and needlework is visible in each display at the museum. She was very hands on with each doll -- from knitting each doll's clothing, to creating the bed covers, rugs and curtains on the walls of the room.

There's even little parts of history in each display. One doll bedroom features fabric in the form of curtains from the original city school.

And this is what makes the museum so unique.

FINDING A HOME

Patton donated the property to the county in 2008 prior to her death the following year on the condition that it be used for the betterment of the archives.

This was a fitting donation, as she was the Putnam County historian from 2004 until her death in early 2009.

"She played a big part in this whole thing," Glenn Jones, current county archivist, said. "If it weren't for her, we'd have never gotten them."

Patton, who was a member of the board of directors of the Cookeville Heritage Museum and a number of other historical boards in the county, approached Jones about the collection, trying to get him to take it under his wing as county archivist.

"She really had a passion for history," he noted. "It was her idea to put them here. She deserves a lot of the credit."

(Pictured: Melinda Swann, friend of Velma Thompson, looks over some of the items on display at the Doll House, located just outside the Cookeville city limits on Hwy. 70).



Jones then went to Kim Blaylock, county executive, about looking at the possibility of setting up a museum for the display.

"We took any help we could get to get this going," he said. "A number of volunteers helped fix the place up and getting the displays ready, and Sarah Johnson of Johnson's Nursery donated the mulch and plants."

A soft opening was held April 25 -- what would have been Thompson's 98th birthday -- allowing out-of-state family members of both Thompson and Patton to tour the new exhibit.

"They absolutely loved it," Blaylock said. "Everyone was amazed at the display and what came of it."

And this is just a part of Thompson's collection -- there are many more in storage.

"This will be a great tourist attraction," Blaylock noted.

The public is encouraged to attend a ribbon cutting and grand opening Saturday, May 12, from 1-4, at the museum located at 1656 W. Broad St. It will be open from those hours each Saturday following the grand opening.

Volunteers are also sought, along with donations.

Call Jones at 931-704-0085 for more information on how to volunteer, donate or to set up a group tour.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 6 May 2012.

Velma Elizabeth (Sherrell) Thompson Obt.

b. 25 April 1914, Putnam Co., TN – d. 21 October 2011, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN, d/o **James Bolivar Thompson** (1872-1949) & **Mary Jane Sherrell**, d/o **Wesley/Jessie Sherrell** & **Lucy Brown**. James Bolivar Thompson, s/o **James Franklin Thompson** (1842-1920) & **Permelia Ann Carr** (1852-1906).

*See Chapter 15 at <http://www.ajlambert.com>

COOKEVILLE -- Funeral services for Miss Velma Elisabeth Thompson, 97, of Cookeville will be held Monday, October 24 at 1 p.m. at Cookeville First Presbyterian Church with interment to follow in Crest Lawn Cemetery. Rev. Pat Handlson will officiate.



The family will receive friends Monday 11 a.m. until time of services at the church.

Miss Thompson died Friday morning, October 21, 2011 at her home.

She was born April 25, 1914 in Putnam County, TN to the late James Bolivar and Mary Jane Sherrell Thompson.

Miss Thompson was the oldest and longest member of Cookeville First Presbyterian Church. Her parents took her to her 1st church service when she was 3 weeks old and until just recently was an active member.

She was a retired Selective Clerk for the U. S. Armed Services.

She was a well known quilter and doll collector. She had acquired one of the largest doll collections in the area which is displayed at the Putnam County Archives Building.

Survivors include several nieces and nephews.

Miss Thompson's nephews and great nephews will serve as pallbearers.

Memorial contributions may be made to Cookeville Presbyterian Church 20 North Dixie Avenue Cookeville, TN 38501.

Hooper-Huddleston and Horner Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements (931) 526-6111. You may share your thoughts and memories at www.hhhfunerals.com.

Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN: 20 October 2011

*See Maurine Ensor Patton Obt. and History of Putnam Co., TN at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>

PATTON HOUSE MUSEUM CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS

by Megan Trotter

Glenn Jones, Putnam County archivist, adjusts the tags on the collection of presidents' wives dolls at the Patton House Museum. Ty Kernea | Herald-Citizen



COOKEVILLE — The Patton House Museum is all decked out for Christmas and will be open special hours for the holiday season. Instead of its regular hours from 1-4 p.m. on Saturdays, the museum will be open from 1-4 p.m. all week Dec. 17-22.

The museum, which is an extension of the Putnam County Archives, is currently home to the Velma Thompson Doll Collection: a display of

more than 2,000 dolls and doll furniture, some of which date back to the 1800s.

“There’s more in here than most people realize,” Putnam County Archivist Glenn Jones said.

In fact, even the now late Velma Thompson didn’t seem to realize quite how many dolls she had collected over the years.

“When she first came here, she said, ‘Glenn, whose are all these dolls? They’re not just mine, are they?’ I

said, ‘Yes, they’re all yours,’” Jones chuckled.

Thompson has since passed away, but during her lifetime, she collected and repaired dolls from all over the world. Lining the walls of the museum are everything from the familiar Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls, to Barbies, to a collection of dolls crafted to look like all the First Ladies of the White House.

The collection is impressive, but what Jones and many male visitors are more interested in is the miniature furniture on display.

“This furniture is salesman’s samples,” Jones explained. “They would put these in their wagons — because these are way back before the car — and they would take them to stores. People would buy stuff after looking at them, and (the furniture) was built just like them, full-size. That makes them history in themselves.”

The Patton House Museum came into being earlier this year.

Before Patton passed away in 2009, she was the Putnam County Historian and talked to Jones about having her family records preserved. When Jones became the Putnam County Archivist, she offered to donate her house and property to the archives to give them more room.

However, it was decided that the home would not be a good fit for housing the archives because the wooden structure was susceptible to fire.

“Before she got sick, she was telling me about Velma Thompson, the woman with the dolls,” Jones said.

“How she knew about the dolls, she was a member of a committee — the Cookeville History Museum has a heritage committee — and (Thompson) was trying to put those dolls in the Cookeville History Museum.”

The collection was so large that the history museum could not accommodate them. Patton suggested Jones take a look at the collection, and he agreed that they needed to find some way to preserve the dolls and put them on display.

When Patton passed away, she requested in her will that her home and property be used as a museum.

After various donations and a haunted house fundraiser that brought in \$8,000, the home was repaired and remodeled and now displays thousands of dolls for the public to admire.

“For future expansion, we want to turn the basement into a Putnam County School exhibit, honoring Ms. Patton who was a teacher in the Putnam County School system,” Jones said.

Museum staff is looking for anyone willing to donate old school desks, chalkboards, bulletin boards, books, maps and photos for the display.

There is also an interest in using doors and other materials from old schoolhouses to recreate a classroom.

For more information about the museum or to make a donation, call 931-520-0042.

Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN: 17 December 2012

THE PATTON HOUSE MUSEUM, VETERANS HALL OPEN THIS SUNDAY



Glenn Jones, Putnam County archivist, puts the finishing touches on the new Patton House Museum sign. Ty Kernea | Herald-Citizen

COOKEVILLE — In conjunction with the Pilot Club's Christmas Tour of Homes, the Patton House Museum, along with the Putnam County Veterans Hall will be open from 1-5 p.m. this Sunday. Light refreshments will be served.

The Veterans Hall and the Patton House Museum are divisions of the Putnam County Archives and are always free to the public. The

Veterans Hall is located at 121 B Dixie Ave., while the Patton House Museum is located at 1656 W. Broad St.

“There were four little girls who visited the museum last week and they were so cute, darting here and there, and saying, ‘Come, Momma, look at this!’” Melinda Swann, one of the hostesses of the Patton House, said. “I brought my own grandchildren there that day and they were totally engaged for three hours, creating their own version of the movie ‘A Night At the Museum.’ They were really having fun. While giving tours, I passed by the framed pictures hanging on the walls of Mrs. Maurine Patton and Miss Velma Thompson several times, and I thought how happy they’d have been to see all the smiles and fun. They were all about making others happy.”



Linda Hargrove Gropp and Nancy Lafever adjust the doll displays at the Patton House Museum in Cookeville.

For additional information about the Patton House Museum or the Veterans Hall, contact Glenn Jones at 931-704-0085.

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*Read more about the History of Putnam Co., TN at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>