

BLOOMINGTON SPRINGS:
ALMOST FORGOTTEN CROSSROADS

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PUTNAM COUNTY - In their search for “almost forgotten crossroads” of Putnam county, the Putnam County Archives has been collecting information from local residents



about Bloomington Springs. This community is located at the crossroads of Highway 291 (formerly 56A), Martin’s Creek, and Highway 56.

(Pictured: Celebrating the new Bloomington Springs sign are in front, from left, Kim Blaylock, Ray Presley, Bonnie Kate Brown, Carol Bradford, and Jean Bowan Farley. In the second row are Glenn Jones, Amanda Ferrell Spencer, Owen Spencer, Betty Stark and David Jack

Patton. In the third row are Joe Ferrell, Claudine Carrington Lacy, Claude Ann Huddleston Burton, Patsy Brown and Ray Feffell. Photo by Megan Trotter, Herald-Citizen).

In 1925, Walter McClain interviewed 73-year-old Scott Brown, a lifelong resident of Bloomington Springs. In McClain’s book, “History of Putnam County” Brown recounts that his grandfather, Daniel Brown, came from North Carolina in 1830 and entered land north of the Walton Road, about one mile from the village of Bloomington. Daniel settled on 900 acres of land. His family slept in a large hollow tree while a cabin was being built and cooked their meals over a log fire. Daniel’s son, Jesse, served as a Missionary Baptist preacher for more than 70 years before he died in 1914 at the age of 95. The land where Bloomington stands now was owned mainly by Matthew Kuykendall and Ridley Draper.

In 1865, Draper developed the land around the nearby spring and made it into a summer resort. He built several small cabins for guests, as well as a 200 guest hotel. The town became the center of the country’s tourism industry for a time.

According to the archives’ records, this Bloomington Springs was first known as Draper Springs and contained a post office that was in service from Oct. 16, 1835, to June 21, 1843. When it re-opened in 1878, it was simply called “Bloomington” and James B. Reid served as postmaster. On Dec. 28, 1907, the name was changed to “Bloomington Springs” and Bailey P. Gunter became postmaster. After that Finando “Dode” Nitious

Billingsley served as postmaster from No. 11, 1911, to May 7, 1914, and again Aug. 17, 1923 to Nov. 14, 1928. His granddaughter, Claude Ann Huddleston Burton, still lives in Putnam County.

Another mail carrier, Everette Presley, worked in that position for 44 years, beginning in 1923. According to his niece, Claudine Carrington Lacy, he had a long route, beginning at the post office and going to Martin's Creek, and then nearly to Granville, back up Shepherdsville Rd., and turning onto Highway 56. Then he went TO Maple Shade and back to Highway 56, returning to the post office.

The Bloomington Springs post office continues to be in service today.

Across from the post office stood a grocery store owned by Porter Bowen. His daughter, Jean Bowen Farley, recalls that it was built around 1939 and she and her family lived in a house next door. The family later sold the store to a man named Clyde West. West's mother, Mary Ike, ran the store until it closed.

In addition to this store and the post office, by 1925, Bloomington Springs boasted two other stores, two gristmills, a sawmill, two churches and a school.

Garland Kuykendall taught school in Bloomington Springs from 1857 to 1861. Soon after 1854, he established Bloomington Seminary, which was in operation until 1860. Some years later, Bloomington College was established. This two-story frame building which burned in 1890.

Claude Ann Huddleston Burton recalls that her grandfather, Dode Billingsley, was a school teacher at the Bloomington Springs School in the 1920s. His daughter, and Claude Ann's mother, Lora Billingsley Huddleston, taught school there for about 30 years when it was a two-teacher school, and served as principal. She retired, but returned to teaching there after it became a three-teacher school and Opal Ferrell was principal. The school closed in August 1978 for lack of attendance. The principal at that time, Marlene Payant, came to Baxter Elementary instead.

The Junior Military Academy was established in 1919 by Col. L. L. Rice, when he realized that young boys didn't need to be with high school boys. In 1922 Rice appointed Major Roy Deberry as headmaster and the school had a rapid growth.

The town also had a bowling alley and an overnight jail for those arrested for being drunk or disorderly. According to the late Summie Brown, a resident of Bloomington Springs before his death, the community had five doctors during his lifetime. In the 1950s, Marion and Mable Thomas opened a convenience store and later a drive-in restaurant and skating rink. By 1970 the drive-in restaurant and skating rink had closed. The establishment of Wildwood Market opened in 1975, at the corner of Highway 56 and Highway 290.

There was also a train depot at Bloomington Springs until 1930, located neat the present location of DelMonaco Winery in Baxter. There was a road that went straight from a hotel to the depot, through the fields, but it is no longer there. The Archives has a map depicting the road from the depot to Bloomington.

The Putnam County Archives thanks Claude Ann Burton and Claudine Lacy for donating the Bloomington Springs community sign in memory of Dode Billingsley and Lora Billingsley Huddleston – Claude Ann’s grandfather and mother – and Everette and Lura Presley – Claudine’s uncle and aunt.

Those with more information to add about Bloomington Springs or any other old community of Putnam County should contact the Putnam County Archives/Veterans hall at (931) 520-0042.

*Read more articles about other communities of ‘Forgotten Crossroads’ at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>



Bonnie Kate Brown pays her respects to her great-grandfather, Samuel Swan, who is buried in the Bloomington Springs Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN.

Samuel O. Swan, b. 9 December 1832 – d. 2 February 1887,
md Judia A. (Farley) Swan, b. 25 March 1836 – d. 24 April
1914, d/o Jesse Farley.