

WAY BACK WHEN: LOOKING BACK IN HISTORY
Happenings in the Cookeville area as recorded in the pages of the
Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN.

By Bob McMillian

1920's

(Compiled by Audrey J. Lambert)

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1921

(May 10, 1921) Mary F. Denny has become the first woman in Putnam County to run for a county office. She has announced her candidacy to run for the office of Putnam Trustee on the Democratic ticket.

1922

(May 2, 1922) Charlie Hughes, who later will go on to radio and national media fame as the Baxter Bugler, begins his 31-year daily ritual of climbing a 20-foot pole in his year at dawn and playing the horn he ordered from a Sears-Roebuck catalog.

1923

(March 1, 1923) Dr. W.A. Howard has established a 12-bed hospital in a two story building on East Spring Street.

(May 11, 1923) A tornado zig-zagged through Overton County's Bethesda community two miles east of Monroe during the night this week, cutting a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile swath that left 20 dead and dozens injured.

The newspaper describes it as the worst twister to ever hit this section of the state. Among the victims were a husband and wife and their seven children who were apparently killed in their sleep.

Reporter Sam K. Neal toured the wreckage and talked to witnesses who say the tornado flattened houses, took a barn and the heavy farm machinery inside it and swept it away like a matchbox, and snatched a new automobile hundreds of feet into the air and dashed it to the ground.

The morning after the storm, a square of linoleum flooring was found sliced into a tree, a fruit tree was found with pieces of straw driven into it like nails, and in the wreckage of a hen house, two chickens were found nesting on eggs, apparently untouched by the violent storm that swept over them during the night.

(June 12, 1923) Dr. Harry Upperman is sent from Pennsylvania to Baxter with orders to shut down the financially failing Baxter Seminary. Instead, he convinces the international General Board of the Methodist Church that the school can be saved and under his leadership, it slowly becomes a successful educational institution.

1924

(January 7, 1924) The term of Cookeville Mayor A.P. Barnes expires today and the newspaper looks at his record for the past three years. His top accomplishments include a hydroelectric dam built and being successfully operated at Burgess falls for \$115,000, and a new brick city school building erected for \$75,000.

(January 10, 1924) A debate has been going on in the newspaper for weeks now over the question of whether a woman's place is in the home.

It continues this week with a letter from a writer who calls herself "Happy Girl" and says, "I am not married and don't know that I ever will but, if I do, I want a husband who realizes there are other places for a woman than in the kitchen or the corn field."

She goes on to comment on the newest controversial hairstyle, bobbed hair. "I don't want my hair bobbed, but those that bob their hair are nothing to me."

On short skirts: "I believe in being decent, but I don't believe in wearing a skirt like a riding skirt. We're not living in the 60's now and times change and we change with them."

(February 4, 1924) The Tennessee Central had its biggest year on record last year and Cookeville's depot did the most business of anywhere on the line.

Total proceeds for Cookeville station in 1923: \$278,59, an increase of nearly ten percent in one year, says Rutledge Smith, general agent for the company, who notes it's a sign of assured growth for Cookeville.

Meanwhile, White County deputy W.C. Welch was slain during a raid by he and two other deputies on a moonshine still operation in the mountains east of Sparta. The trio was ambushed and Welch killed one of the moonshiners before he himself died.

(February 28, 1924) The City has adopted a new ordinance forbidding homeowners from letting chickens or geese run at large. They must be properly penned or there'll be a fine.

And Mayor W.A. Hensley says he's instructed police to arrest "reckless autoists" who travel through town too fast.

"I will endeavor to see that this ordinance is enforced even if we have to put plainclothesmen on to see that this menace is stopped."

(March 24, 1924) Quimby Dyer writes in page one letter: "What's the matter with Cookeville? How does it plan to attract industry with poor roads?"

He comments, "Cookeville has about 25 miles of public streets, all in the poorest condition. At the present time, 20 are almost impassable. The other five make a new car look old and worn out in a few months. Some streets are sixty feet wide, some fifty, some forty."

(April 3, 1924) H.S. Barnes, Jr., the four-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. H.S. Barnes, was stuck by a car driven by Charles Cox this week on Walnut Avenue. The fender snagged his clothes after striking him and drug him 40 feet before Cox could stop. The youth only received bruises and scrapes.

1926

(July 1, 1926) Jack Carver becomes the county's first licensed funeral director.

1928

(April 11, 1928) With a crowd of about 200 watching from the banks of the rising Falling Water River, the partially earthen Burgess Falls Dam collapses after a night of heavy rains and washes away the newly constructed electric power production plant that supplies power to Cookeville.

1929

(January 16, 1929) County road supervisor H. D. Whitson gave his annual road report for 1929 this week. Operating on a \$13,827 budget and using the labor of jail inmates and horse-drawn road graders, he

reported that he graded a new road in Martins Creek, graveled Buffalo Valley Road and Fisk Road, and did a considerable amount of work improving Buck Mountain and Phifer Mountain Roads.

(February 26, 1929) The Cookeville City Commission approves construction of a concrete and steel dam at Burgess Falls to replace the dam washed away last spring. The reservoir the dam will create will power Cookeville's new electric generation facility until 1944 when the city contracts with TVA for electricity.

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