

SILVER POINT, TN HISTORY

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SILVER POINT COMMUNITY: Heritage of Putnam County Tennessee – 2008 by the Putnam County Heritage Book Committee and County Heritage, Inc., pg. 12. Story compiled by Carolyn Adcock, 1283 Jefferson Road, Smithville, TN 37166-5468.

Silver Point is located 16 miles southwest of Cookeville, near the DeKalb County line. Its name came from the naming of the Post Office. **Before the Post Office was named, the area had been called “the head of the valley” as it was at the top of the hill on the road leading out of Buffalo Valley.** The Postal Service would not accept that name as it was too long. The story goes that a letter was received from the Postal Service telling them to select a name of one or two words. As this decision was being contemplated on the front porch of Walter Jones’ general store, Dr. W. S. Farmer rode up on his horse. When this question was put to him, he thought for a minute, spurred his horse and as he rode off he called back to the group, **“just call it Silver Point.”** Thus, Silver Point came into existence as a place name.

When the railroad came through in the 1890s, it became a community with a train depot and a post office located, at that time, in P. C. Halley’s general store. Wallace, Tucker, and Bartlett were some of the earliest settlers of the area. In 1890 it was mainly populated with farm families, such as: Joe Wallace, James Prentice, J. L. Foster, P. M. Wallace, J. B. Wallace, Mansfield Smith, B. L. Jones, James Williams, G. W. Prentice, J. W. Smith, B. S. Puckett, A. G. Burton, W. O. Dollar, R. Fields, and L. Holley families. Businesses at that time were: R. S. Alcorn and M. Bartlett, livestock; H. Bartlett, corn mill; Charles Denny, stonemason; R. Gaines, M. L. Syper, and M. W. Syper, physicians; R. C. Halley and J. L. Mitchell, merchants; P. Jones, W. M. J. Wallace, and John Tucker, Justices of the Peace; W. L. Mitchell, blacksmith; M. Scuter, carpenter; A. L. Wallace, shoemaker; Tucker and Mitchel Livery Stable; and J. F. Halley, Post Office.

In 1905 the 78 citizens of Silver Point did their banking at Cookeville. The Burton brothers, W. K. Christian, and J. M. Lafever had general store and mercantile businesses. Walter Jones had a general stable and liver, B. J. Jones had a general store, and W.D.P. Womack had a grocery. There was also a millinery.

From 1909-1920 there was an African-American boarding school known as the Silver Point Christian College (also known as Putnam County Normal and Industrial School and Silver Point School). By 1917 Author Hall’s Studio made many photos for the local population. Henry H. Clay, an ex-slave and Union soldier, was a blacksmith who built wagons from the found up. Clay was prosperous and was held in high regard by all in the community.

EARLY TOWNS OF PUTNAM COUNTY by Ernest H. Boyd.

SILVER POINT:

Silver Point post office was established many years before the building of the Nashville and Knoxville Railroad and the establishment of a railroad station at that point. **It is said that the name of the postoffice had its origin in a tradition that there were deposits of silver ore in that section,** but no one now seems to know the basis for that tradition. The village of Silver Point is situated seven miles from the Center Hill Dam, the construction of which has been an impetus to the growth and development of the village.

Silver Point has a most favorable location, at the head of Buffalo Valley and contiguous to the splendid Caney River farming section. It has an ideal physical location for a good town. During the past few years, numerous substantial new buildings have been erected at Silver Point. The community has a splendid citizenship and good community leadership. It has two of the most beautiful and valuable rural church buildings in this section of the State. Each of its churches has an active membership. They are the Silver Point Presbyterian Church and the **Silver Point Church of Christ.**

Silver Point has a splendid public school building and a good public school.

Silver Point has had good general stores throughout its history, and it has always been an important trading center and shipping point.

Located in a good farming section, having an excellent location for a town, and being situated near the Center Hill Dam and power plant, Silver Point has a bright future. It's continued growth and development is certain.

EARLY COUNTY TOWNS WERE LOCATED AT RAILROAD STATIONS:

By Ernest Houston Boyd

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN: 22 October 1953

Previous articles have related the history of the founding of Cookeville and Bloomington Springs. All of the other towns and villages of Putnam County had their beginning with the location of railroad stations on the Nashville and Knoxville Railroad. The towns of Baxter, Double Springs, Boma, [Silver Point](#) and Buffalo Valley [all had their beginning in 1890](#). The towns of Monterey, Algood and Brotherton had their beginning in 1893. After the Nashville and Knoxville Railroad was built Eastwardly to Cookeville in 1890, further construction of the railroad did not take place for three years, but in 1893 construction of the railroad was resumed and it was built to Monterey, hence the Putnam County railroad towns and villages West of Cookeville are three years older than are Monterey, Algood and Brotherton, located East of Cookeville.

As soon as the sites of the railroad stations were announced by the Nashville and Knoxville Railroad Company, the building of a town at each railroad station was commenced. Of course, the town of Cookeville and the village of Bloomington Springs were founded many years before the construction of the Nashville and Knoxville Railroad, and they were the only two towns in Putnam County prior to the construction of the railroad through Putnam County.

MONTEREY FOUNDED BY MINING FIRM FOLLOWED BUILDING OF T. C. RAILROAD,

by Ernest H. Boyd.

Previous articles have related the history of the founding of Cookeville in 1854. All of the towns and villages of Putnam County, except Cookeville and Bloomington Springs, had their beginning with the location of railroad stations on the Nashville and Knoxville Railroads.

Prior to the building of the Nashville and Knoxville Railroad there were only two towns in Putnam County. They were Cookeville and Bloomington Springs.

The towns and villages of Baxter, Double Springs, Boma, [Silver Point](#), and Buffalo Valley all had their beginning in 1890.

The towns of Algood, and Monterey and the village of Brotherton all had their beginning in 1893.

RAILROAD GREATEST INDUSTRIAL EVENT:

The building of the Nashville and Knoxville Railroad to Cookeville to Monterey in 1893, was, of course, the greatest industrial event in the history of our county. The benefits and advantages accruing to our county, and to this entire Upper Cumberland area, from the construction of the Nashville and Knoxville Railroad through our county can never be adequately evaluated. To its construction, we are indebted for the subsequent growth and progress of Cookeville, and also for the [founding of the towns](#) of Monterey, Algood, Baxter, and Double Springs, and the villages of Buffalo Valley, [Silver Point](#), Boma and Brotherton. We should never forget the many years of persistent effort and hard work upon the part of the leading citizens of Cookeville and Putnam County to secure the construction of a railroad through Putnam County. They rendered a public service of inestimable value.

NEGRO CHURCHES:

Prior to the emancipation of the Negro slaves, they practically all attended the churches of their white

master, where portions of the white churches were reserved for them. After the close of the Civil War, the white churches, through their Missionary Boards, and by donations made by white individuals, commenced the erection of Negro church buildings and Negro congregations were organized. Shortly after the close of the Civil War two Negro Methodist congregations and one Negro Cumberland Presbyterian congregation were organized in this county, and church buildings were built. They were the old Shad Grove Methodist Church, two miles North of Cookeville, on the Livingston road; Caney Ridge Methodist Church in the 15th District, and Rock Springs Cumberland Presbyterian Church, in Rock Springs Valley.

Shortly after the building of the Nashville and Knoxville Railroad to Cookeville, in 1890, and the building up of the Negro suburb in the West end of the town, the Negro Methodist and Cumberland Presbyterian church buildings were erected.

Upon the building of the Railroad to Algood and the founding of that town, in 1893, a Negro Methodist Church, Burton's Chapel, was built in Algood.

At later dates, the following other Negro churches were erected in this county; the African Methodist Church in Algood; the [Negro Church, of Christ at Silver Point](#); the Negro Church, of Christ in Cookeville; the Negro Holiness Church, in Algood and the Negro Baptist Church, in Cookeville.

For several years, there were Negro congregations in both the 10th and 17th Districts, but most of the Negro families moved from those communities and the Negro congregations in those districts ceased to exist. Cookeville now has four active Negro churches.

RURAL DOCTORS:

[Dr. Thomas Jefferson Smith](#), a very capable physician, was a resident of Laurel Hill, in DeKalb County, for many years, but several years before his death he moved to [Silver Point](#), where he continued actively in the practice of his profession until his death. He was a Elder in the Presbyterian Church and was a splendid Christina gentlemen.

(Dr. Thomas Jefferson Smith M.D., b. 17 September 1870, Laurel Hill, TN – d. 14 March 1948, Nashville, Davidson Co., TN, md Mattie Belle McDonald. Thomas Jefferson Smith, s/o Samuel Houston Smith & Mary Ann Maxwell).

TWO NEGRO GIRLS ENLIST IN WAACS FROM PUTNAM:

The first Putnam County girls having the distinction of being the first to volunteer and be accepted for service in the WAACS at the Nashville headquarters are two negro girls.

Auxiliary Purney D. Strode, daughter of James Clark Strode, of Cumminsville, enlisted February 27, and is now stationed with Co. 2, 33rd Reg., Ft. Denvens, MA.

Auxiliary Opal G. Johnson is the daughter of John Johnson of Silver Point. She attended Darwin High school in Cookeville for two years, an was a student at A & I, Nashville for the same length of time.

Volunteering for service on March 4, she was sent to Ft. Devens, MA, for training, and is also with the 33rd Regiment.

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN: 20 May 1943

Herman Johnson Obt.

Services At Silver Point For Herman Johnson, 48:

Funeral services were held Monday afternoon for Herman Johnson, 48, at the Silver Point Church of Christ

(colored).

Johnson died at his home near Silver Point after a short illness.

Survivors include his wife, Willie McKinley Johnson; two daughters, Mrs. Rosa Mae Gardner of VA and Miss Virginia Johnson, Silver Point; three sons, J. Willard, Willie Floyd and Garry Johnson, all of Silver Point; and one brother, Chester Johnson of MI.

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN: 10 November 1949

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:

Silver Point is an [unincorporated](#) rural settlement in [Putnam County, Tennessee, United States](#), scattered around the intersection of State Highway 141, State Highway 56, and [Interstate 40](#), about halfway between [Cookeville](#) and [Smithville](#).

Landmarks: Notable features include the National Register of Historic Places: [West End Church of Christ Silver Point](#). [Edgar Evins State Park](#) is also nearby.

Notable People: Notable natives include journalist [Christine Sadler](#) and her brother [James C. Sadler](#).

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:

The **West End Church of Christ Silver Point** is a folk vernacular brick church in the [unincorporated community](#) of [Silver Point, Tennessee](#), United States. A primarily [African-American Church of Christ](#) congregation has met at the church continuously since its construction in 1915. In 2007, the church was added to the [National Register of Historic Places](#) for its role in the history of the Upper [Cumberland](#) region.



The church is rooted in the Silver Point Christian Institute, a mission school established largely through the efforts of [Churches of Christ](#) evangelists George Phillip Bowser (1874–1950) and [Marshall Keeble](#). Along with providing badly needed education facilities to the Upper Cumberland's small African-American population, the school published the *Christian Echo*, a Church of Christ newsletter circulated nationwide. In spite of early financial struggles, the school, with the help of Nashville minister [David Lipscomb](#) and philanthropist A. M. Burton, managed to survive until 1959. The church, built for the mission school community in 1915, has remained in operation to the present, however.

Location:The West End Church of Christ Silver Point is located along Center Hill Dam Road (State Highway 141) in the western half of Silver Point, a rural community scattered around the intersection of State Highway 141, State Highway 56, and [Interstate 40](#), about halfway between [Cookeville](#) and [Smithville](#). Along with the church, the property includes a modern cemetery and a small monument commemorating the church's establishment. Like most of the [Highland Rim](#), the area is rugged and hilly.

History: In the late-19th and early-20th centuries, education opportunities for the small African-American population of the Upper Cumberland were scarce. In his book *The Souls of Black Folk*, author [W. E. B. Du Bois](#) wrote of the primitive conditions of a black schoolhouse at nearby [Alexandria](#), where he taught class while a student at [Fisk University](#) in the 1880s. In 1909, after delivering a sermon at the Laurel Hill Church of Christ in [Nashville](#), Evangelist George Phillip Bowser was approached by fellow Church of Christ ministers Sam Womack and Alexander Campbell with a request to establish a church at Silver Point. Bowser agreed on the condition that he also be allowed to establish a mission school for the area's African-American children, which was granted.

In late 1909, Bowser opened what was initially known as the Putnam County Normal and Industrial Orphanage at Silver Point. Womack, Campbell, and another Church of Christ official named Henry Clay served as the school's first board of directors. Students paid between fifty cents and one dollar per month for tuition, and six dollars per month for room and board. Operating costs were augmented by the sale of produce grown in the school's 8-acre (3.2 ha) garden, and by the sale of wagons built by Clay and several students. The school also published the *Christian Echo*, a Church of Christ newsletter founded by Bowser in 1903, and shipped the newsletter to subscribers across the country.

In spite of efforts to reduce operating costs, the school struggled financially. One of the school's teachers, Annie Tugwell, asked Nashville educator and minister David Lipscomb for help, and Lipscomb turned to Nashville insurance magnate A. M. Burton, who agreed to provide financial assistance. In 1913, the school became the Silver Point Christian Institute, which taught grades 1 through 8. With better financing, a new frame building was constructed in 1915 by P. H. Black, an African-American architect from Nashville. The building was used by both the school and the West End Church of Christ congregation, the latter founded in 1915.

Bowser resigned as the school's principal in 1918 due to frustrations over lack of steady financial support for the school. He later founded schools in [Michigan](#) and [Texas](#), and continued publishing the *Christian Echo* (the newsletter is still in publication today). Classes continued at the West End Church until 1959, when the school's students were [bused](#) to Putnam County's public schools. The church's congregation, however, still meets regularly.



The West End Church of Christ Silver Point is an example of a simple, rural church with an African-American folk vernacular design. The structure is a rectangular brick structure with a concrete foundation and a gabled, asphalt-shingled roof. The church's south wall contains a covered porch and the double-door main entrance. The north wall once contained two rear doors, but these have been sealed. The east and west walls both contain four windows topped by brick arches. The

top of the south wall contains a block of concrete which may have at one time held a stone inscribed with the name of the church or school.

The church's interior follows a basic floor plan, with two sets of pews divided by a central aisle leading to the pulpit. The pews are not original, but were retrieved from another church building. The pulpit is flanked by two rooms that serve as a Sunday school classrooms. In the 1970s, the walls were covered with wooden paneling, and acoustical tiles were added to the ceiling.

A granite monument commemorating the founding of the church and its predecessor, the Silver Point Christian Institute, stands near the entrance to the church's driveway. A modern cemetery is located behind the church.

1900 census Putnam Co., TN, Civil Dist. #11:

Eli Carr, Head, Black Male, b. May 1875, 25 yrs. old, TN TN TN Farm Laborer.

Nathan Smith, Head, Black Male, b. May 1850, 50 yrs. old, md, TN TN TN Farmer.

Em Smith, Wife, Black Female, b. March 1847, 53 yrs. old, md, TN TN TN

George H. Smith, Son, Black Male, b. May 1875, 25 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN Farm Laborer.

Bulian Terrell, Head, Black Male, b. May 1865, 35 yrs. old, md, TN TN TN Farmer.
Myni Terrell, Wife, Black Female, b. March 1865, md, 4 children born, 4 children living, TN TN TN
Leonard Terrell, Son, Black Male, b. March 1878, 22 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN Farm Laborer.
Isaac Terrell, Son, Black Male, b. February 1888, 12 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN Farm Laborer.
Carrie Terrell, Dau. Black Female, b. January 1894, 6 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN

Thomas Bartlett, Head, Black Male, b. May 1860, 40 yrs. old, md, TN TN TN Farmer.
Lucinda Bartlett, Wife, Black Female, b. January 1861, md, 9 children born, 9 children living, TN TN TN
Elmo F. Bartlett, Son, Black Male, b. February 1878, 22 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN Farm Laborer.
James W. Bartlett, Son, Black Male, b. April 1881, 19 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN Farm Laborer.
Calvin C. Bartlett, Son, Black Male, b. September 1883, 16 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN Farm Laborer.
John L. Bartlett, Son, Black Male, b. November 1885, 14 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN Farm Laborer.
Ewin M. Bartlett, Son, Black Male, b. March 1887, 13 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN Farm Laborer.
Henry B. Bartlett, Son, Black Male, b. June 1889, 10 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN Farm Laborer.
Mary E. Bartlett, Dau, Black Female, b. November 1890, 9 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN
Willie C. Bartlett, Son, Black Male, b. September 1892, 7 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN
Lilly Bartlett, Dau, Black Female, b. May 1899, 1 yr. old, single, TN TN TN
Charlie Baker, Boarder, Black Male, b. May 1880, 20 yrs. old, single, TN SC SC Farmer

Ben Manier, Head, Black Male, b. May 1865, 35 yrs. old, md, TN TN TN Farm Laborer.
May Manier, Wife, Black Female, b. March 1875, 25 yrs. old, md, TN TN TN
Lela Manier, Dau, Black Female, b. January 1893, 7 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN
Eve Manier, Dau, Black Female, b. May 1895, 5 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN
Ola Manier, Dau, Black Female, b. May 1897, 3 yrs. old, single, TN TN TN
Benjamin F. Manier, Son, Black Male, b. March 1899, 1 yr. old, single, TN TN TN

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