

**MONTICELLO WAS FIRST NAMED AS COUNTY SITE
BUT NEVER REALIZED**

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Cookeville's Early Rival Succumbed...Before It Really Had A Start:

Dr. J. P. Terry's farm, just East of the Corporation, was the home place of Curtis Mills, first Circuit Court Clerk of Putnam County after it's re-organization. Dr. Terry's residence occupies the site of the old Mills home. After the death of Curtis Mills, this farm for many years belonged to Dr. L. R. McClain, Dr. McClain lived for several years in the old Mills residence, but later erected a large two story residence on the West side of the farm, where he lived until he broke up house-keeping and sold the residence and a large tract of land to Oscar Ferguson, who now resides at Dr. McClain's former home place.

Dr. Terry also owns the Jonathan Buck farm, which includes the ruins of the old Buck College, about which a great deal could be written, it being one of the most historic places of this county.

Standing only a few hundred yards East of the present corporate limits of the town is all that is left of the historic old Buck College buildings. Today it is a weather-beaten and dilapidated two-story structure built of great hewed poplar logs and weather boarded outside and ceiled inside. The greater part of the building have long since disappeared. Originally two large two-story buildings were connected by a very large dining hall intended for boarding students.

Jonathan Buck and his father, Isaac Buck, both men of splendid education, began the erection of the Buck College building in 1849 or 1850. The first term of school in this historic building opened in 1852, and the sessions continued, without interruption, until shortly after the Civil War broke out. The college was never revived after the close of the Civil War, however, Jonathan Buck for several years after the close of the war taught an unpretentious private school in the building. In that old building, before Cookeville was established, Jonathan Buck kept a postoffice, "Monticello" and published a weekly newspaper, "The Monticello Times."

Jonathan Buck and his father, Isaac Buck, waged a hard but unsuccessful effort to have the County site of Putnam County established about Buck College and the County site named "Monticello."

This contest is a very interesting chapter in the history of Putnam County.

Jonathan Buck continued to reside in the old Buck College building until 1885 when he died. In his young manhood he "had visions and dreams" enough to serve well his day. His dreams of "Monticello, a progressive county site town built around Buck College, did not happen. The location is beautiful, and perhaps some day Cookeville will envelope all of the _____ of Buck College and then will the dreams and plans of Jonathan Buck fill their fruition, but too late to gratify his personal ambitions or enhance his business interests.

Experience of Monticello and Buck College could have been exerted, no doubt by Jonathan Buck had he sought competent legal advice in 1844. Had he been properly enabled, and contested the suit instituted in 1844 in the Chancery Court at Livingston to enjoin the County officials of Putnam County from their duties as such county officials, his efforts would, beyond all question, have been successful, as the Supreme Court of this state later held in a reported opinion, which has ever since controlled, that offer the organization of a county is complete, and the original commissioners have executed their duty, that _____not the province or within the jurisdiction of the Courts of Justice, the civil officers of a county preceding in their official duties.

Under the Act of 1842, establishing Putnam County, it was provided that the name of the county site town be Monticello.

Monticello was one among many Tennessee towns and prospective _____ that were voted on in the General Assembly of 1843 for the permanent location of the State Capital; according to the State archivist.

In 1844, the Commissioners appointed by the County Court for the purpose of determining upon the mention of the County site town, decided in favor of the Buck College site, but before the town could be laid out and the public buildings erected certain citizens of Overton county instituted the suit previously referred to and, strange to say, no defense was made to the suit by Putnam County. The result was that Putnam County ceased to function for ten years or until 1854, when Major Richard F. Cooke, of this county, then State Senator from this district, secured the passage of the Act, re-establishing Putnam County, and the county site town was located at its present site and named "Cookeville."

It was provided by Sec. 13 of the – re-establishing Putnam county, passed February 11, 1854, that so much as ten Commissioners named in Sec. 12 of the Act should "locate the seat of justice for the county of Putnam" it should be the duty of the County Court to appoint five Commissioners, who shall proceed to lay off a town of the place designated to be named Cookeville, in honor of Maj. Richard F. Cooke, of Jackson county, with as many streets, and of such width as they may deem proper, or necessary and a half for a public square; a lot for a public jail; and for a male and female academy, and for the erection of a church for public worship."

Maj. Richard Cooke, is whose honor Cookeville was named, was a native of Culpepper County, Virginia, where he was born January 8, 1787.

He emigrated to Tennessee in 1810 and in 1812 he located on his large farm, then consisting of several thousand acres, on the old Gainesboro-Sparta road, about two miles from Double Springs.

He was a large slave owner and a prosperous man. He served two terms in the State Senate. Two of his sons, Watson Cooke and Bolivar H. Cooke, became prominent business men of Nashville.

He has many descendants now living in Putnam County.

Major Cooke died, October 15, 1870. He is buried in the Cooke family grave yard near his home. This cemetery is located about three miles Southwest of Double Springs.

Jonathan Buck was buried at the Buck graveyard, about three miles East of Cookeville.

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