

MAKING A NAME FOR NAMELESS

By **MARY JO DENTON**
Herald-Citizen Staff

Plenty of RC, Moon Pies

Town with unique name sees return of a landmark.

NAMELESS -- A bottle of RC Cola cost a nickel, baloney and cheese were sold by the slice, and customers often came to sit a spell and play checkers.

That's how it was at the J.T. Watts general store in the small Jackson County community of Nameless back in the 1950's. And that's how it will be again, at least for a time, on May 27, as nearby Granville celebrates Heritage Day.

Cookeville banker Davis Watts and his sister, Hilda Watts, the children of J.T. and Virginia Watts, practically grew up in that store, helping their father run his business after their classes each day at the two-room one teacher Nameless School nearby.

It was an almost magical childhood, tucked safely into a time when no one had to think of safety in a tiny community which, ironically, is well-known today because of its quaint name and yesteryear atmosphere.

The paradoxical name of the little community is something which has attracted the attention of journalists and other writers in recent years.

"Yes, Nameless has been the subject of several feature articles in papers and magazines, and it was also featured in the book, Blue Highways: A Journey Into America," Davis Watts said.

"But to us, it's just home."

He's been working for some time now to restore his father's old general store.

"I'm doing it not exactly as a museum, but just for the memories of days gone by, memories of the life my family enjoyed there," he said.

The little community located about eight or ten miles from Putnam County on the Shepherdsville Highway, had a population of about 250 during its heyday. There were homes and farms, a post office, the school and a couple of stores.

The Watts family owned and operated the general store from 1957 to 1978, when J.T. and Virginia retired and moved to Cookeville. Others who owned the store over the years included J.M. and Nancy Ferguson, Mack and Ruby Myers Brown, Freeman and Bertha Carter Neal, and A.D. and Vida Ruth Ragland McBroom.

The Nameless resident who bought the building when J.T. Watts retired converted it to a residence, but the Watts family kept the old store fixtures, and last year, Davis Watts bought the building and he and his sister began restoring it "for the memories."

Today, Nameless is still Nameless, still quaint, small and full of various versions of how it got its name.

Watts says he believes the version which claims the townspeople could not agree on a name for the place when the official application for a post office was sent to Washington.

"They sent the application to Washington without a name, and Washington stamped it 'nameless' and sent it back, and that's how Nameless got its name," Watts said.

Today, the school is long gone, the post office is gone (though Watts is also working on restoring it as part of the store), and there is no store, general or otherwise.

But a couple of hundred people still live there, and many are expected to attend the Heritage Day opening of the refurbished old general store, which won't be an actual business, but will simply be there for historical purposes.

On Heritage Day, May 27, from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., visitors may step into the store and back into time, thanks to Davis and Hilda Watts.

There will be RC Cola, moon pies, baloney and cheese and other treats. Someone might even get out the old checkerboard.

To get to Nameless, take Highway 56 north out of Baxter, turn left on State Highway 290 (Shepherdsville Highway), and drive a few miles, slowly.

Published May 20, 2006 5:17 PM CDT : Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN



Hilda and Davis Watts led the restoration of their family's general store in the town of Nameless in Jackson Co., TN.

Photo by Herald-Citizen Staff/ Ty Kernea

GIVE SOMEONE A PIECE OF HISTORY FOR CHRISTMAS

[Mary Jo Denton](#)

Herald-Citizen Staff



Davis Watts “works the counter” in his general store museum, the restored J.T. Watts General Merchandise store in the Nameless community, while Marie Wheeler and Dolores Angelini enjoy a chat. The store museum will hold a Christmas open house this Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Herald-Citizen Photo/Ty Kernea

UPPER CUMBERLAND -- If you can't think of what to give someone for Christmas, how about a piece of history?

Most of the history museums in this area -- including two in Cookeville and one in

Livingston -- sell books and other items dedicated to local history, all suitable for Christmas gifts.

And a general store museum in the Nameless community is holding a Christmas open house this Saturday for those who love nostalgia.

* In Cookeville, the Depot Museum and the Cookeville History Museum, located in the downtown Westside area, sell railroad memorabilia items, pottery items, mugs with a Cookeville logo, Putnam County throws, Sarah Holloway's "Cookeville Voices" and other books written by local authors.

* In Livingston, the Overton County Heritage Museum, located at 318 W. Broad St., sells "Overton County Tennessee Pictorial History," a thick book containing many photos from the past in that area. The proceeds go to the Overton County Historical Society.

The museum also sells "Let's Go Play," by local author and folklorist Callie Melton. The book describes many of the games that children of yesteryear played long before the days of TV and computers.

Just the names of the games are interesting: Town Ball, Rotten Egg, I Lost My Glove (or Drop the Handkerchief), Green Gravel. Melton explains each game and recalls how popular they were back in the day.

* In Nameless, the restored J.T. Watts General Merchandise store museum owned by Davis and Hilda Watts will have a Christmas open house this Saturday, Dec. 8, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

As in the old days when the store was the center of the little rural community in the edge of Jackson County, there will be baloney, cheese, crackers, and Coca Cola. The store, which is decorated for Christmas, offers a look back to the old days before supermarkets and mega marts. Admission is free.

To get to Nameless, take Highway 56 north out of Baxter, turn left onto Highway 290, and drive a few miles.

Friday, Dec 07, 2007: Herald Citizen, Cookeville, TN

NO PLACE LIKE NAMELESS

Mary Jo Denton
Herald-Citizen Staff, Cookeville, TN



Davis Watts stands in front of the general store museum in Nameless, Tenn., where he grew up. Sitting on the porch of the store, as was the custom of the past, are Jeremy Bolenbarker (chair, front left), in back, from left, Mark Brown, Rusty Chilcutt, Nicholas Plunkett, Raymond Pharris, Marie Wheeler, Lucie Bolenbarker, Ryan Bolenbarker, Jossalyn Plunkett, Adriel Stout, Nancy Stout, Ivan Bilbrey, Vila Bilbrey, Dolores Angelini. Herald-Citizen Photo/Ty Kernea

NAMELESS -- This little community's ironic name is part of its charm.

Located in a rural area in the edge of Jackson County and having a population of around 200, it makes Mayberry look like a city. And that's how everyone wants it to stay, a vision from yesteryear.

Every summer, visitors hankering for a taste of the past visit Nameless to sample the peace of country living and savor memories of a simpler time. This year's Nameless Heritage Day is set for Saturday, May 24.

Visitors on that day may take in a community fundraiser offering baked goodies, Nameless Fire Dept. cookbooks, and Nameless T-shirts. The Fire Dept. will also have fire prevention and safety information packets, fire hats for the children, and smoke detectors for community residents.

Visitors may also "trade" at the old country store in Nameless on Heritage Day. It is actually not a store but a museum that has been preserved from what used to be J.T. Watts Gen. Mdse, the center of the community in its heyday back in the 1950's.

Davis Watts and his sister, Hilda, of Cookeville, the son and daughter of J.T. Watts, grew up there and have created this museum, making it as much like the store they recall from their youth as possible.

Each year, they open it to the public on special occasions and use the "trade" to gain donations for the Nameless Community Center and the Nameless Volunteer Fire Dept.

The summer opening this year will be held on Nameless Heritage Day, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. That's also the same day as the 10th annual Granville Heritage Day celebration in another small Jackson County community located not far from Nameless.

"We usually open the store at Nameless on Heritage Day, on Labor Day, at Christmas, and on other special occasions," said Davis Watts.

When the store is open, everyone is invited to stop by and have a Pepsi or Coke, a moon pie, a baloney and cheese sandwich. There is no charge, but the hope is that everyone will make a donation to help the little community with its fire department and community center.

A portion of the donations will also go to the Veteran's Hall project in Gainesboro, and that is in honor and memory of all the Nameless residents who have served in the military, Watts said.

This year, the Nameless store's May 24 opening will also feature hand-crafted pottery items made by James

Watts, the son of Davis Watts. The items in his display will also be for sale.

Another special feature this year is a birthday celebration at noon for Elmer (Shorty) Winningham of Cookeville, who will be 101 on May 25. While the Nameless store is a tribute to old-time values and community history, Winningham is a living monument to those ideals, and the Watts family honors that.

"He's an amazing man, still gets around and works in the garden," said Davis Watts.

Among the Nameless residents you might meet on Heritage Day is Dolores Angelini, president of the Community Center. She and her husband moved to Nameless back in the late 1970's from their home just outside New York City.

"We wanted to get away from the rat race, and we looked at places in Maryland and Virginia, then in the Cookeville, Tennessee, area," Angelini said. "A realtor was taking us around this area, and he said, 'I've got one last place you might be interested in, and it's in Nameless.' And when we heard that name, we said, 'That's it!'"

They love the place.

"It's a nice, friendly community," Angelini said. "We're all family here."

You might also meet the Nameless Fire Dept. Assistant Fire Chief Lucie Bolenbarker, who moved with her family to Nameless from Virginia a few years ago after retiring from the Navy. How did she and her husband choose Nameless?

"It's a long story," she said. "I'm from Massachusetts, my husband's from Texas, and Tennessee's in between."

If you take in the Nameless Heritage Day on Saturday, May 24, you may also want to travel on a few miles and enjoy Granville Heritage Day.

That celebration of the local history also features a restored country store, Ben Sutton Store & General Merchandise. There will also be a bluegrass festival, square dancing, an antique car show, a Granville School reunion, crafts booths, and many other attractions.

Nameless is located on Highway 290 (Shepherdsville Highway) near the Jackson and Putnam County line. To get there, take Highway 56 north out of Baxter and turn left on Highway 290.

Sunday, May 18, 2008: Herald Citizen, Cookeville, TN

<http://www.ajlambert.com>



DONATION TO ATMS SOFTBALL

Softball season begins soon for Avery Trace Middle School, and First Tennessee Bank recently awarded the team with a generous sponsorship to help cover expenses related to hosting teams in Cookeville. Pictured, from left, is **Davis Watts, senior vice president of the bank**, who is presenting a check to softball team members Jan Kathryn Hutchins and Shelby Enochs. For more information on sponsoring the team, contact coach Charity Espinosa at 520-2200.

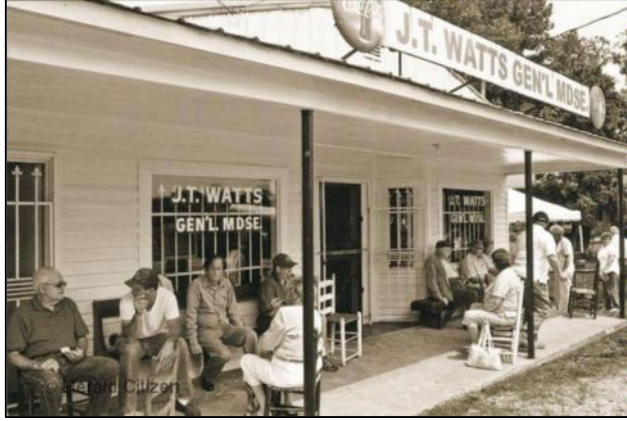
Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: Sunday, 8 February 2009, pg. B-2.

NOTHING LIKE A DAY IN NAMELESS

[Mary Jo Denton](#)

Herald-Citizen Staff

Sunday, May 17, 2009, Cookeville, TN



At last year's Heritage Day in Nameless, visitors relaxed on the porch of the store museum that was the J.T. Watts general store, the center of the little community back in the 1940s and 1950s. Photo by Dean Carothers

It's almost time for that priceless annual journey to the Nameless community in the edge of Jackson County.

Nameless is a rural community of about 200, and every summer, folks there host visitors from everywhere at the Nameless Heritage

Day. They come for a daylong taste of rural life as it used to be.

Heritage Day is set for Saturday, May 23.

The heart of the little community today features a community center, a volunteer fire department, and the J.T. Watts general store, which has been restored as a museum.

The store will be open for Heritage Day and will have baloney and cheese sandwiches, moon pies, soft drinks, and crackers -- just the way it used to be back in the old days.

Davis Watts of Cookeville, the son of the late J.T. Watts, has worked tirelessly for years to recreate his father's store, where he and his late sister, Hilda Watts, spent many afternoons as children privileged to grow up in the Nameless community.

Back in those days before modern supermarkets, everyone in the community stopped by the store to pick up groceries or just to chat with neighbors and pass along the local news. Mostly, they were farmers, and everyone knew everyone. If somebody needed help, neighbors were there to provide it. No one had to lock their doors. Everyone looked out for everyone.

Memories of those simpler times are good, and that's why Davis Watts and other Nameless natives as well as those who have moved in and love the place work each year to provide Heritage Day for all who want to visit.

The refreshments offered at the store this year are free, but donations for the Nameless Volunteer Fire Department, the Nameless Community Center, and Veterans Hall will be appreciated, Watts said.

Also, the Community Center and Fire Department will be holding a bake sale and garage sale fundraiser.

Another special feature this year is a visit from Sandra Gaither Pitchford of Searcy, Arkansas, who has written a book about her father, J.B. Gaither, who was a popular Church of Christ preacher in Jackson County back in the 1950s through the 1970s. She will be in Nameless from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Heritage Day.

Nameless is located on Highway 290, the Shepherdsville Highway, near the Jackson and Putnam County line. To get there, take Highway 56 north out of Baxter and turn left on Highway 290.

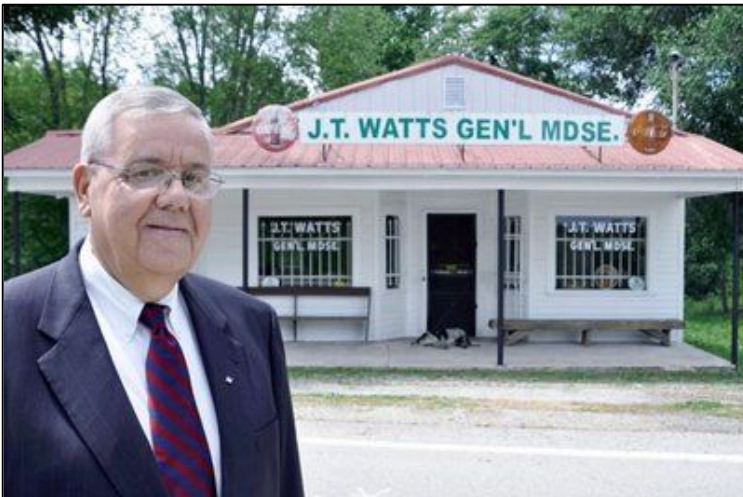


Davis Watts and his father, the late J. T. Watts, sit on the porch of the general store the family owned in Nameless back in the 1960's. Today, Davis Watts has restored his father's old store as a museum, which will be open to the public Saturday, May 23, 2009, Nameless Heritage Day.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: Sunday, May 17, 2009.

NAMELESS COMES ALIVE FOR HERITAGE DAY

by Mary Jo Denton, Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN



Down home in Nameless, Cookeville's Davis Watts stands in front of the country store his father owned and operated for many years. The store is now a museum and will be open to the public on Nameless Heritage Day, Saturday, May 29. Herald-Citizen Photo/Ty Kernea

JACKSON COUNTY -- The days in Nameless, Tennessee, pass slowly -- no Walmart, no traffic to speak of, no noise, no prickly politics.

But on Saturday, May 29, a lot of people will be there to celebrate the old-time rural atmosphere of this tiny community.

That's Heritage Day, both in Nameless and in Granville on down the road. And for that day, there will be big doings. Relatively speaking, of course, which is how they like it there.

Nameless, located on the Sheperdsville Road just over the Putnam County line, is home to about 200 people, but many more than that grew up there and moved away, or know someone who did.

The annual heritage day draws them back, just for a taste of what used to be.

One of the natives now living in Cookeville is Davis Watts, who has preserved a large part of his childhood by restoring his father's old general store in Nameless. His parents, the late J.T. and Virginia (Miss Jennie) Watts, owned the store back in its heyday.

It is a place where he and his sister, the late Hilda Watts, spent many hours after school and in the summer time. It is now a museum, which he opens on Heritage Day so that everyone can experience what it was like to "go to the store" instead of "going shopping."

There are no other stores in Nameless, not even replicas. Also, there is no longer a school, not even the old building where Nameless children learned the three R's so long ago. It closed back in 1965 and was torn down not long afterwards.

But there is a community center and a volunteer fire department -- and the same farm fields and homes where Nameless residents live in the peace and quiet that draws visitors every year on Heritage Day.

"Last year, we had between 800 and 1,000 people come through, a lot of them stopping in on their way to Granville's Heritage Day," Watts said. "It's a big day."

The little community has gained considerable fame over the years through the varying stories about how it got its name. The most often repeated tale is that the U.S. Postal Service dubbed it Nameless because the first settlers there couldn't agree on a more proper-sounding name for a town.

And no, no one has ever suggested a "Name That Town" contest for Heritage Day. Such an idea would leave Nameless natives speechless.

The J.T. Watts General Store museum will be open from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. on Heritage Day, and the Nameless Community Center will also be open.

There will be refreshments, bake sales, a yard sale, and other attractions, including Nameless T-shirts for sale. Photos of the old Nameless School and its students from the 1950s and 1960s will also be on sale, and all proceeds go to the Community Center, the Fire Department, and the Veterans Hall, Watts said.

To get there, take Highway 56 north out of Baxter, turn left on state Highway 290 (Shepherdsville Highway), and drive a few miles.

22 May 2010: Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN

<http://www.ajlambert.com>