

## PUTNAM COUNTY SEARCHING FOR 'FIRST FAMILIES'

by Amy Davis  
Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN  
13 January 2013



Claude Ann Burton, above, center, looks for information about her ancestor, Isaac Alexander Huddleston, a resident of Putnam County in 1842. She is part of a First Families of Putnam County project that recognizes individuals who can trace their roots back to the formation of the county. Joining her in the effort are Jill Jones-Lazuka, left, and Joann White. Amy Davis | Herald-Citizen

Members of the First Families of Putnam County steering committee are, in front, from left, Eunetta Jenkins of Old Walton Road DAR, Sharon Mata of the Upper Cumberland Genealogical Association, Carol Bradford of Putnam County Archives, and, in back, Stacie Johnson of the Putnam County Library, JoAnn White of Friends of the Cookeville History Museum, Lynn Twitty of UCGA and Jill Jones-Lazuka of OWR-DAR. Also part of the committee are Charlene McClain of the Tennessee Tech University Library and Earl Jacquess of Friends of the Cookeville History Museum.



Jordan Fleming Huddleston, born 1825, and Mary Bradford Huddleston, born 1824, were among Putnam's first families when the county formed in 1842. Cookeville History Museum

**PUTNAM COUNTY** — Her family goes back to the beginning — back when Putnam first became a county in 1842.

Pioneers they were.

"I just grew up always knowing who my ancestors were," said Claude Ann Burton, formerly a Huddleston. "It was a thing to be proud of. And then I married into another family with roots well established here."

Now Burton is part of a collaborative effort by several area genealogical and historical organizations to discover more "first families" in order to honor and perpetuate the memory of the county's early pioneers.

The project — First Families of Putnam County — stems from state legislation designating July as Genealogy Month in Tennessee.

"What we're looking for are the descendants of those people who first settled in Putnam County," said Joann White, steering committee member and Cookeville History Museum volunteer, who was instrumental in the project kick-off.

"As a museum volunteer I was looking into the area's first settlers — and there were lots of them — which got me started trying to get a list. It's an overwhelming task, so I thought people would like to help out."

Anyone wishing to participate in the project can get an application at the Cookeville History Museum,

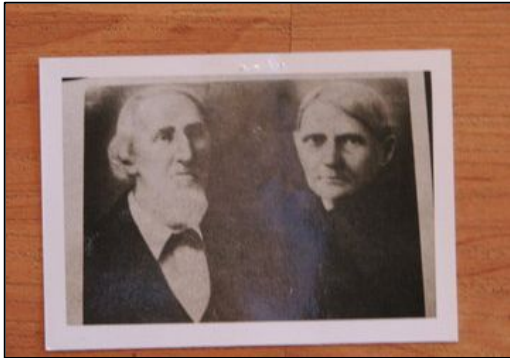
Cookeville Depot, Putnam County Library or on the Upper Cumberland Genealogical Association website, UCGA.info.

Those successful in tracing their ancestry back to the formation of the county will be recognized at an open house in July and also receive a certificate.

Some — like Burton — may already know their family's heritage. Others will just have to do the research and find out.

The big dates to focus on are 1842 and 1854.

"Putnam County was formed twice," White explained. "In 1842, it became a county, but Overton County said Putnam took too much of their land... and (Putnam) lost the county. But then Major Cooke became a legislator and got Putnam County going for the second time."



Those with family roots dating back to 1842 are considered pioneers; those between 1842 and 1854 are settlers.

First Families applicants must be direct descendants of their chosen ancestor — providing the descent for each generation with documentation — and have documents to prove their ancestor's residency in Putnam County during the designated time period, such as Census, birth, death,

marriage and military records, wills, deeds, family Bibles, letters and diaries. The application fee is \$15.

The opportunity for recognition is open to anyone — not just current residents of Putnam County.

"They will need to do their genealogical research, and the library has lots of information for them to find out about their families," White said. "A lot of people are doing their family history in this area, so this program is kind of an extension of that."

Anyone needing help getting started can join White and other steering committee members, including Jill Jones-Lazuka, on Mondays in February at 5 p.m. in the Tennessee Room of the Putnam County Library.

"We can help them complete their application or help them start their research from scratch," Jones-Lazuka said. "But the application is pretty straight forward — we made it user-friendly as compared to a lot of genealogy application forms, so that it is encouraging to people."

Organizations involved in the First Families of Putnam County project include Friends of the Cookeville History Museum, Old Walton Road chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution, Upper Cumberland Genealogical Association, Putnam County Archives and Putnam County Library.

"What we're doing is continuing the First Families of Tennessee program," White said. "We just thought First Families of Putnam County would flow along with that. Plus, it gives us a whole lot of information about who was here in the 1800s."

White and Jones-Lazuka encourage other counties to follow suit in the effort to identify their first families.

To them, it's simply an effort to promote genealogy and build upon local history — as neither of them actually qualifies as part of Putnam County's first families.

"So, we're not doing it out of a selfish interest!" Jones-Lazuka said. "We're doing it so people can have that sense of belonging."

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN: 13 January 2013.

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