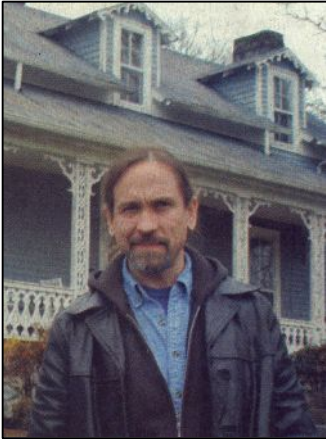


## PRESERVING THE UPPER CUMBERLAND PAST

The UCDD's Randy Williams a one-man preservation team working to save and recognize the region's historic treasures.

By Jill Thomas – Herald Citizen Newspaper Staff,  
Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN

1 May 2005, Front page:



How much does it cost to have a building approved for the National Register of Historic Places?

Officially nothing, but there can be substantial research costs and those were the concern of Dick and Ellen Fahey who spent years gathering information about property they bought in Buffalo Valley that could be traced back as far as 1769.

"Normally you have to hire someone to do the research for something like this. We had investigated doing that but then decided to try to do as much of the work ourselves as we could," Dick Fahey said.

Then the Faheys heard about the Upper Cumberland Development District's Historic Preservation Specialist Randy Williams. (*Pictured left*).

"We had no idea the Development District had a preservation specialist. It turns out this is a service they do free-of-charge for the community," Fahey said.

"Randy jumped right in and picked up the research and even went to the archives in Nashville to get additional information.

"He brought it all together. I gave him bits and pieces that I had found, military records and stories and things like that and he put it together with what he found. I can't even begin to estimate how many hours that took," Fahey said.

Williams also brought in experts who could confirm the property's history and he filled out the extensive application required by the National Register.

"You got the feeling from Randy that this was a labor of love," Fahey said.

It was a labor that took more than two years to complete.

### A new program at UCDD

The Upper Cumberland Development District added an historic preservation program to its list of services three years ago to help residents identify, register and protect significant historic and archeological properties.

Since that time, three properties in the 14-county district have been added to the national register:

- \* The Cowan Homestead in Buffalo Valley in Putnam County.
- \* The Alpine Historic District in Overton County.
- \* and the old Highway Patrol Building in Crossville in Cumberland County.

### Helping communities

But adding items to the national register is not Williams only responsibility.

The preservation specialist also serves as a consultant and an educator.

When Fentress County Executive John Mullinax wanted to add a clock to the clock tower on the Jamestown courthouse, he called Williams to get some advice.

"I was able to connect him with Campbellsville Industries which specializes in that kind of thing," Williams said.

"My job is to put the right people together so the whole community benefits."

So this July 4th, for the first time in 100 years the bells of the Jamestown Courthouse will strike in time to an actual clock.

Williams also helps communities and organizations apply for historic markers like the one going up on May 18 in Cumberland County which commemorates Camp Crossville, the WWII prisoner-of-war camp.

There are times when helping a community requires some tough love from Williams.

"Because I'm a member of the Tennessee Preservation Trust I have some input on a list they make each year of the 10 most endangered areas in Tennessee," Williams said.

"The areas that make that list often get some attention from the media and sometimes get help quicker than those not on the list."

For Williams one of the most endangered areas is the old York Institute in Jamestown.

"That school was Alvin York's legacy," Williams said.

"All of his life he was known by outsiders as that famous soldier of WW1. But York spent his life as an educator and York Institute came about because of his interest. He raised the money for it, but when it ran out of money during the depression the state took it over. It was a state-owned and state-operated high school.

"Now the roof is falling in and it's a deserted building. The community wants to save it and make a museum out of it.

"Getting it on the list of most endangered areas should bring awareness to the problem and generate interest from organizations and the community at large," he said.

### Current projects

At present Williams is working on two projects:

\* The Cumberland Corridor where 21 counties in Middle Tennessee have been declared a national heritage corridor by the Dept. of the Interior.

Of those counties, eight are in the Upper Cumberland Development District, including Putnam County, Williams said.

"The project would link cultural resources like state parks, water falls, scenic gorges, rails with trails projects -- all sorts of historical and cultural resources would be linked so the public could follow the trail.

"The Plateau is within a five hour drive of 26 metropolitan areas," Williams said.

"That's an area that has a total population of 18 million people who might take advantage of driving through that corridor."

In addition, Williams is currently working on an education program for the entire development district.

"We're in the development phase of the Upper Cumberland Cultural Heritage Education Program. This is program for seventh and eighth graders. We want to educate them about local artisans and craftspeople, get them to find out how their grandparents lived and things like that.

"We want kids to know they come from somewhere. They're not just a product of the 20th century."

This fall Williams will try out the curriculum on a pilot program in Overton County.

For adults Williams does presentations to community groups on the economic benefits in preserving important cultural and historic artifacts and areas.

And finally, Williams works on grants.

"I'm batting a thousand on getting the grants," he said.

"People call and say, 'I've got a project, but where can I find...?' and I'm able to help them. In Smith County a group wanted to convert the high school gym to a theater and we were able to help them."

Williams is currently working on a grant in Macon County to restore old school buildings and one to help restore an old antebellum home.

He's working on a "transportation enhancement" grant that will help get funding to preserve old railroads, some with bike and hike trails and welcome centers.

He has provided help for people restoring old graveyards, recognizing signs that there are additional gravesites outside the fenced in area and connecting restorers with experts in Knoxville and Nashville who can bring their expertise to a project.

He gets his own expertise from working for five years as an archaeologist for the state of Tennessee plus knowledge from growing up in Putnam County and his Bachelor's degree in history and a Master's in English from Tennessee Tech.

With a "territory" that includes 14 counties and 5,000 square miles, Williams has to be selective in what he chooses for his projects.

"But I've been very fortunate in that Patty Jones, my supervisor and Wendy Askins, the director of UPDD have been so good at allowing me to do projects that I want to do," he said.

The Upper Cumberland Development District's motto is 'Improving the quality of life for all of our citizens.'

Williams wants everyone to know how far reaching that motto is.

"My job is to let people know that quality of life is not just about services and plumbing," he said.

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Celebrating the opening of an exhibit titled "The Sharp Edge of the Sailing Navy," on display now at the Cookeville History Museum, are from left, in front, Edward Philpot, visitor; Pamela Philpot, History Museum exhibit specialist; and standing, Dr. Sam Barnes, to whom the sword display belongs; Eunetta Jenkins and Randal Williams, on the board of the Friends of the History Museum.

## **Cutlass exhibit opens at History Museum, Cookeville, TN:**

Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN 21 August 2005

“I thought cutlasses were ships...no, cutlasses are cars.”

These were two of the comments made at the opening of the Cookeville History Museum’s latest exhibit, “The Sharp Edge of the Sailing Navy.”

According to museum administrator Judy Duke, neither statement is exactly correct. The cutlasses in this exhibit are swords, part of a collection amassed by Dr. Sam Barnes ranging in origin from the 1700s to 1942.

Barnes’ interest in sharp edges began early in his life. His first sword from Japan, was given to him by a family friend after WWII.

From that gift, Barnes developed his interest in sharp objects, which also extended to fencing in college and a career as an orthopedic surgeon.

The History Museum, located at 144 S. Lowe Ave., is open Thursday-Saturday from 10 a. m. – 4 p.m. Special tours can be arranged for other times by calling 520-5455.

The museum features many items of historical interest in addition to the cutlass exhibit. Admission is free.

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