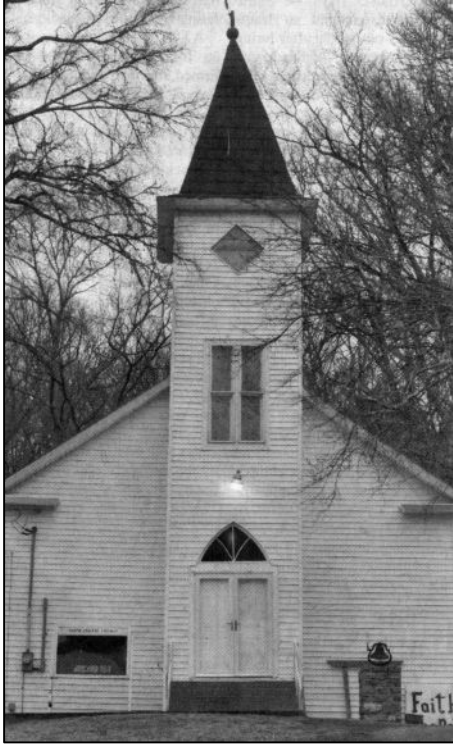


BLACK FAMILIES LEFT A LEGACY FOR PROGENY

By J. B. Leftwich

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: Sunday, 7 February 2010, pg. A-10

PUTNAM COUNTY – Near the site of the old Rock Springs Valley school building in western Putnam County, a hillside offers final rest for early residents, uniting in one communal cemetery the remains of members of two races.



An invisible line of demarcation marks the separation of long deceased residents of African heritage from Caucasian descendants. Today, decades of trees and entangling vines obscure graves of pioneers of both races who shaped the valley's culture and developed a thriving community.

(Pictured: Rock Springs Church in Buffalo Valley is not far from a rural cemetery on a hillside where some of the valley's pioneer families are buried).

The history of Rock Springs Valley would be incomplete without attention to the African-Americans who before World War II lived throughout the widespread community.

Although there were several black families then, I am concentrating here on the Maddux families who lived on farmland west of the road that runs in front of the Rock Springs church building.

These families were highly respected. Through their diligence, energy and thrift, they made farming profitable for landowners. Indeed, some of the black farmers of Rock Springs in those years also were landowners.

My favorite black adult in my boyhood was Wilburn Maddux, who owned and operated a gristmill. In those years, I would shuck and shell corn on our hand-cranked sheller – about a bushel of grain, which was placed in a special cornmeal sack. Then, I divided equally the grain in the sack and loaded it on the back of a horse.

I loved the gristmill and talking with Wilburn Maddux who, despite his years of wisdom, never talked “down” to me.

A motor from a Model-T Ford automobile powered his mill. A belt connected the mill and the engine.

It's doubtful anyone else could have operated the mill. After he cranked the engine, he turned a corn cob to adjust the flow of fuel, rotated a horseshoe here and tugged a trace chain there to maintain operation. I was amazed at his ingenuity.

Before grinding, he took a toll of grain as a charge for the service, then poured the remainder into a bin that fed into the space separating the two millstones. At the end of the sequence, the meal emptied into my meal sack.

When I was too small to load the meal on the horse's back, he assisted me. Later, when I was larger and stronger, he backed away from this chore, recognizing I wanted to demonstrate my maturity and strength.

Most of the black residents were farmers who tended fields that produced large quantities of corn, wheat, oats and hay. Each family also had a garden and grew vegetable for immediate use and for canning.

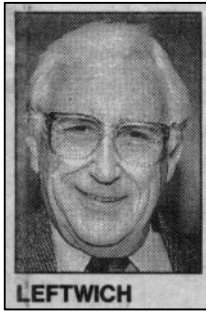
In those days, the black children attended a one-room school about one mile from the one-room Rock Springs school I attended. Though not a firm memory, I believe church services for black worshippers also were held in the school building.

World War II changed life in Rock Springs Valley. Young men left the community to serve in the armed forces or to work in factories. Most never returned to the valley. The era of the sharecropper disappeared. In a new and different way of left elsewhere, education became more important, their children graduated from high school, and many attended and graduated from college.

As far as I know, very few whose roots derived from the Rock Springs community ever earned a Ph.D. One of the two I know was Rochelle Dail, of Lebanon, a great-granddaughter of Wilburn Maddux.

Dr. Dail is an assistant professor at the University of Alabama where she teaches early literacy and elementary reading methods. She currently is administering a program in Bogota, Columbia.

I asked Carolyn (Shanks) Huddleston, whose family lines extend through several generations in Buffalo Valley and Rock Springs adjacent communities, and who is a librarian in Buffalo Valley, to assist with this story. She wrote:



“I know of two families who, just as the Madduxes, were highly respected. They lived on Indian Creek. I remember that Elmo Nichols Maddux would take the children to her house to teach them to read.

“Another family lived further up the creek toward Buckner and we would go there to see the woman’s talking parrot. One time, she came to our house to wash our clothes and I remember her filling the big galvanized tub with water from the well. She told us to ‘get in there with your bare feet and work the clothes up and down.’”

In this century, no black families live in Rock Springs, a footnote to community history largely unrecorded by both black and white early residents who now rest in neglected graves on an obscure hillside.

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*See more of J. B. Leftwich articles and stories and more about the history of Buffalo Valley and Putnam Co., TN at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>

Some census records of African-Americans living in Putnam Co., TN near WILBERT MADDUX:

Census Place: 1880 District 11, Putnam Co., Tennessee

Source: FHL Film 1255275 National Archives Film T9-1275 Page 169A

Dwl: 148

| | Relation | Sex | Marr | Race | Age | Birthplace |
|----------------------|---------------|--------|--------|------|-----|------------|
| Henry PEAK | Self | M | M | B | 52 | TN |
| Occ: | Laborer | Fa: TN | Mo: TN | | | |
| Huldy PEAK | Wife | F | M | B | 40 | TN |
| Occ: | Keeping House | Fa: TN | Mo: TN | | | |
| Nathan PEAK | Son | M | S | B | 18 | TN |
| Occ: | Laborer | Fa: TN | Mo: TN | | | |
| Pleasant PEAK | Son | M | S | B | 15 | TN |
| Occ: | Laborer | Fa: TN | Mo: TN | | | |
| Frank PEAK | Son | M | S | B | 12 | TN |
| Occ: | Laborer | Fa: TN | Mo: TN | | | |
| Mat PEAK | Son | M | S | B | 5 | TN |
| | | Fa: TN | Mo: TN | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------|--------|--------|---|----|----|
| Cloln PEAK | Son | M | S | B | 2 | TN |
| | | Fa: TN | Mo: TN | | | |
| Solon PEAK | Son | M | S | B | 1M | TN |
| | | Fa: TN | Mo: TN | | | |
| Martha LAMBERSON | SDau | F | S | B | 8 | TN |
| | | Fa: TN | Mo: TN | | | |
| Catharine LAMBERSON | SDau | F | S | B | 5 | TN |
| | | Fa: TN | Mo: TN | | | |

Census Place: 1880 District 11, Putnam Co., Tennessee

Source: FHL Film 1255275 National Archives Film T9-1275 Page 169A

Dwl: 150

| | Relation | Sex | Marr | Race | Age | Birthplace |
|----------------------------|----------|--------|------|------|-----|------------|
| Hugh B. MADDUX | Self | M | W | W | 25 | TN |
| Occ: Farmer | Fa: VA | Mo: VA | | | | |
| Elizabeth MADDUX | Mother | F | W | W | 65 | VA |
| Occ: Keeping House | Fa: VA | Mo: VA | | | | |
| Id LAMBERSON | Other | M | S | B | 18 | TN |
| Occ: Laborer | Fa: TN | Mo: TN | | | | |
| Sintha APPLE | Other | F | S | B | 16 | TN |
| Occ: Servant | Fa: TN | Mo: TN | | | | |
| Tennessee MCKINDLEY | Other | F | S | B | 11 | TN |
| Occ: Servant | Fa: TN | Mo: TN | | | | |

1900 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 157 Family: 159 – **David Roberson** is head of household, 28 yrs. old, b. April 1872, TN, M B, md 16 yrs. to **Virginia**, 28 yrs. old, b. Mary 1872, F B, 9 children born, 6 children living. Children: Herbert, 15 yrs. old, b. January 1885; King, 12 yrs. old, b. January 1888; Allie, 8 yrs. old, b. March 1892; Mary, 6 yrs. old, b. May 1894; Thomas, 2 yrs. old, b. March 1898 & Nettie Roberson, 4/12 yrs. old, b. January 1900. All born in TN.

1900 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 158 Family: 160 – **WILBERT MADDUX** is head of household, 25 yrs. old, b. April 1875, TN, M B (parents both born in TN), Occupation: Farmer, md 4 yrs. to **Mary**, 27 yrs. old, b. May 1873, TN, F B (parents both born in TN), 2 children born, 2 children living. Children: Willie, 3 yrs. old, TN & Joseph Maddux, 2 yrs. old, b. July 1897, TN.

1900 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 159 Family: 161 – **Solon Peek** is head of household, 29 yrs. old, b. March 1871, TN, M B. Living in the household, Martha Peek, sister, 27 yrs. old, b. May 1873, F B; Mat Peek, brother, 24 yrs. old, b. October 1875, TN, M B & Clah Peek, 21 yrs. old, b. May 1879, TN, M B.

1900 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 160 Family: 162 – **Evans Huddleston** is head of household, 70 yrs. old, b. March 1830, TN, M B, md 8 yrs. to **Catherine**, 39 yrs. old, b. May 1861, F B, 4 children born, 4 children living. Children: Birdie, step-daughter, 16 yrs. old, b. September 1883, TN & Lee Huddleston, 10 yrs. old, b. March 1890, TN.

1900 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 161 Family: 163 – **John Lamberson** is head of household, 35 yrs. old, b. February 1865, TN, M B, md 15 yrs. to **Moncie**, 27 yrs. old, b. March 1873, TN, F B, 5 children born, 4 children living. Children: Nebraska, 13 yrs. old, b. June 1886; Charley, 7 yrs. old, b. June 1893; John, 6 yrs. old, b. January 1894 & James Lamberson, 2 yrs. old, b. May 1898. All born in TN.

1910 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 129 Family: 129 –**George Skillon** is head of household, 35 yrs. old, TN, M B, md 1 yr. to **Josie**, 21 yrs. old, TN, F B, 2 children born, 2 children living. Children: John, 4 yrs. old; Peete, 2 yrs. old & Rene Skillon, 3 yrs. old. All born in TN.

1910 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 131 Family: 131 – **John Lamberson** is head of household, 46 yrs. old, TN, M B, md 25 yrs. to **Samantha**, 50 yrs. old, F B, 7 children born, 6 children living. Children: John A., 14 yrs. old; James J., 12 yrs. old; Mary, 6 yrs. old & Isac Lamberson, 3 yrs. old. All born in TN.

1910 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 132 Family: 132 –**Mat Peak** is head of household, 30 yrs. old, TN, M B md 7 yrs. to **Olie Peak**, 26 yrs. old, F B, TN.

1910 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 133 Family: 133 – **Solon Peak** is head of household, 26 yrs. old, TN M B md 3 yrs. to **Bula**, 21 yrs. old, TN, F B, 1 child born, 1 child living. Child: Mat Peak, 18/12 yrs. old, TN. Also living in the household: Brad Lamberson, 22 yrs. old, TN, M B.

1910 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 134 Family: 134 – **WILBERT MADDUX** is head of household, 35 yrs. old, TN, M B, md 14 yrs. to **Mary**, 30 yrs. old, TN, F B, 5 children born, 5 children living. Children: Willie, 12 yrs. old; Marshal, 8 yrs. old; Elishia, 6 yrs. old; Be, 3 yrs. old & Martha Maddux, 2 yrs. old. All born in TN.

1910 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 135 Family: 135 – **James Huddleston** is head of household, 80 yrs. old, TN M B md 15 yrs. to **Catherine**, 47 yrs. old, TN, F B. Also living in the household: Haskel Huddleston, boarder, 9 yrs. old, TN, M B.

1920 census 1st Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 372 Family: 373 – **Solon Peak** is head of household, 35 yrs. old, TN M Mu, Occupation: Labor, planning mill, md to **Beula**, 30 yrs. old, TN, F MU, Occupation: Washer woman. Children: Mat Peak, son, 12 yrs. old, Mu, TN, Occupation: Labor working out; Henry Peak, son, 10 yrs. old, M Mu, TN; Eugene Peak, son, 5 yrs. old, M Mu, TN; ?, son Peak, 4+ yrs. old, M Mu, TN & Mary Emma Peak, 1/12 yrs. old, F Mu, TN.

1920 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 159 Family: 160 – **Sherman Bartlett** is head of household, 50 yrs. old, TN, M B md to **Catherine**, 50 yrs. old, TN, F B. Children: Myrtie, 17 yrs. old; Broron (sp), 14 yrs. old; son, 11 yrs. old & Bessie Bartlett, 7 yrs. old. All born in TN.

1920 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 160 Family: 161 – **Jim Lamberson** is head of household, 20 yrs. old, TN, widow M B. Living in the household, **Samantha Lamberson, mother**, 50 (should be 60) yrs. old, TN; Mary Lamberson, sister, 17 yrs. old, TN & Isac Lamberson, brother, 15 yrs. old. All born in TN.

1920 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 161 Family: 162 – **WELBERT MADDUX** is head of household, 45 yrs. old, TN, M B, md to **Mary**, 40 yrs. old, TN F B. Children: Elisha, 18 yrs. old, TN; Bee, son, 16 yrs. old, TN & Myrtle Maddux, 2 yrs. old, TN.

1920 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 162 Family: 163 – **John Mainor** is head of household, 46 yrs. old, TN, M B md to **Evangeline**, 21 yrs. old, TN, F B. Children: Allie D., 4+ yrs. old, TN & Myrtle Mainer, 2 yrs. old, TN.

1930 census 1st Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 231 - **Lonnie M. Carver** is head of household, 35 yrs. old, M neg, TN, Occupation: Butler, private home, (22 yrs. old 1st marriage) md to Mattie, 29 yrs. old, F neg, TN, (18 yrs. old 1st marriage). Living in the household: Issac Carver, son, 9 yrs. old, M neg. (parents both born in TN).

(SS Death Index: Name: **CARVER, ISAAC P** – Birth: 23 Aug 1920- Death: 24 Aug 2003– Age: 83- Last Residence (Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN) - Last Benefit: (none specified) – SSN: 413-22-1456, Issued By: TN)

Isaac P. Peak (surname Carver, raised by Lon Melvin & Mattie Carver)

b. 23 August 1920, TN – d. 24 August 2003, buried in the Algood Heritage Cemetery, Algood, Putnam Co., TN. Isaac P. Peak Carver md 1 June 1946 to **Nina A.**, b. 9 December 1926.

Lon Melvon Carver, b. 2 May 1894, TN – d. 26 December 1965 md **Mattie (unknown) Carver**, b. 12 April 1900, TN, both buried in the Buck Cemetery for blacks, located on the south side of 9th Street in Cookeville, TN east of Sycamore School.

1930 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 117 Family: 117– **Haskel Carr** is head of household, 30 yrs. old, TN, M neg (20 yrs. old 1st marriage) md to **Della**, 28 yrs. old, TN, F neg (18 yrs. old 1st marriage). Children: Virgle, 6 yrs. old; A. B., 5 yrs. old; Willie, 3+ yrs. old & Mattie, 8/12 yrs. old. All born in TN.

1930 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 118 Family: 118 – **WILBURN MADDUX** is head of household, 54 yrs. old, TN, M neg (21 yrs. old 1st marriage) md to **Mary**, 50 (25 yrs. old 1st marriage), F neg. Children: Bee, Maddux, son, 21 yrs. old, TN; Willie Maddux, son, 34 yrs. old, TN, M neg, (25 yrs. old 1st marriage) md to Della, daughter-in-law, 33 yrs. old, TN, F neg, (27 yrs. old, 1st marriage).

1930 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 120 Family: 120 – **Elijah Maddux** is head of household, 25 yrs. old, TN, M neg (17 yrs. old 1st marriage) md to **Myrtle**, 25 yrs. old, TN, F neg (17 yrs. old 1st marriage). Children: Mary F., 6 yrs. old, TN & Della M. Maddux, 2+ yrs. old, TN.

1930 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 121 Family: 121 –**Clabe Peck** is head of household, 52 yrs. old, TN, M neg (20 yrs. old 1st marriage) md to **Gennie** (sp), 60 yrs. old, TN, F neg (28 yrs. old 1st marriage). Children: Maggie Peck, dau., 35 yrs. old, TN, single; Della, granddaughter, 13 yrs. old, TN & Henry Peck, grandson, 12 yrs. old, TN.

1930 census 11th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 122 Family: 122 –**Eugene Peck** is head of household, 27 yrs. old, TN, M neg (20 yrs. old 1st marriage) md to **Lillian**, 27 yrs. old, TN, F neg (20 yrs. old 1st marriage). Children: Connie, 6 yrs. old, TN & Lean Peck, 4+ yrs. old.

(September 10, 1942) A group of black Putnam Countians were on page one this week in a story detailing their departure for military service for their country in the war with Japan and Germany.

Leaving for the military were Isaac Carver, Haywood Carr, Brad Holladay, Charles Buck and Billy Ray Bohannon.

They'll be joining the ranks of other black men who recently left here for the military says the newspaper, including George Burgess, A. B. Ray, James Robinson, Hooper Morgan and Henry Peck.

*Read more J. B. Leftwich stories at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>