

Central High School finds a New Home  
By Bobbie Bruton  
Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN  
Centennial Edition- 3 June 2003

Central High School finds a New Home  
After years of sharing space with other schools, a new building was constructed and opened in 1932 to house a four-year high school for Putnam County students.

For many years, high school students in Putnam County were bounced from one place to another, sharing space with college students and then grammar students, never finding a real home.

Velma Thompson of Cookeville was a member of the last high school graduating class at City School in 1932. She and her classmates shared a building with grammar school students.

“We didn’t see much of the younger students,” she recalled. “Our classes were all on the first floor, and the younger grades were on the upper floors.”

Cookeville officials and the Putnam County Herald began promoting the idea of a permanent home for high school students in 1928.

In a special session of the county court on February 10, 1930, that lasted more than four hours, the first vote was taken on whether to build a new high school in Cookeville.

Speeches were made in favor of a new high school noting that a special session of the legislature had enacted a bill requiring that each county build and maintain a high school in the county seat of the respective county.

Others at the meeting stressed the need to serve the first and surrounding districts and the value of the school to the county.

But when the vote was taken, it was soundly defeated with 30 votes against it, eight voting for it and seven not voting.

Another meeting was held that summer to try and figure out what to do with the more than 800 grammar school students and the 340 high school students, all housed in the City School.

One suggestion was to move the lower grades out of City School and school them in churches. But that idea didn’t meet with the approval of citizens.

For that year, the problem was finally resolved by allowing one floor of the building to be used for high school students for the 1930-31 school year.

The issue of voting bonds for a new high school was finally put to the voters in 1931 and passed.

Fourteen acres of land were purchased north of town to build the school. When construction of the school was completed in 1932, it had 14 classrooms, a modern cafeteria with a steam table, a gymnasium, science labs, an auditorium and facilities for vocational and home economics courses.

On September 5, 1932, a few days before the school opened for classes, the public was invited to tour the new building. The Putnam County Herald reported that those who toured the new school were impressed and pleased with what they saw.

James Grogan and his wife, Billye Marguerite Lee Grogan were students at Central High School from 1936 – 40. Central High School was not a meeting place for the tw3o, who actually met in first grade at City School. They only class the two shared while at Central High was a Latin class.

The school had clubs related to the courses offered, and Grogan was a member of the FFA (Future Farmers of America). This club, as did many of the others, held a banquet each year.

Grogan took agricultural courses at the high school and remembers David Terry, the agriculture teacher, as one of the teachers he liked most.

“I had a good English teacher too,” he said. “She was Sheila Officer. She was strict, but she was a good teacher.

Grogan remembers the school as “really modern for its day.”

Although the school had a cafeteria and served hot lunches, most students continued to bring their lunches from home. Students were not required to eat in the cafeteria and could, in fact, eat their lunch outside or just about anywhere they wanted to.

With the opening of the new high school, Putnam County began providing bus transportation for students who lived outside the city. This early bus system, which was privately contracted, including two buses as well as some private cars used to transport students.

“We thought we were living high, going to a new high school,” Grogan said.

This past spring, Prescott Central Middle School students, who now occupy the building, celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what was once Central High School.

CELEBRATING A HUNDRED YEARS  
**Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN**  
**11 February 2003**

With the opening of Central High, the overcrowding at City School was abated — but for only a short time. Within a few years the school was once again experiencing overcrowded conditions. In an effort to relieve overcrowding, a new grammar school, Capshaw School, was built in 1939 in a neighborhood just off the square. The four-room school had four teachers who taught grades 1-4. Students transferred to City School for grades 5-8.

It was during the early 1960s, that a vote was taken to build a new high school to replace both Central High and Algood High School. Central High would become a junior high school for grades 7-9, and the elementary schools were designated for grades 1-6.

The construction of the new senior high school, located on Highway 70 East, for grades 10-12 was plagued by various disputes and even litigation between the contractors, school board and Quarterly Court. The design of the school was a new concept featuring clusters of classrooms that branched from the school's gymnasium, cafeteria and auditorium. This design, which some people said gave the building an "extraterrestrial appearance," immediately met with the disapproval of many residents, because of the inconvenience placed on students who had to go outdoors to change classes. And as soon as it was occupied, the school was again overcrowded.

Putnam County schools continued to struggle with overcrowded conditions during the 1980s. In addition to the lack of space, aging schools were showing signs of wear.

And once again, school officials expressed the need for a new high school. A 1980s Task Force studied the situation and decided the best way to create enough space for schools was to build a new high school and eliminate the K-6, 7-9 and 10-12 structure by returning to a four-year high school and establishing two middle schools.

After much debate about whether to build one or two high schools and where to build, construction began on a state-of-the-art facility on North Washington Avenue that cost more than \$40 million. The new high school, the largest in the state, would be called Cookeville High School and provide instruction for grades 9-12.

The former Central High School, turned into a junior high school, would now become Prescott Central Middle School for fifth and sixth-graders. Much of the building which housed the senior high school was torn down and rebuilt for seventh and eighth-graders as another middle school known as Avery Trace Middle School.

As the 1996-97 school year began, all Putnam County elementary schools became K-4 schools. Newly constructed Cane Creek Elementary, on the western edge of town, opened for the 1996-97 school year in hopes it would further reduce the overcrowding in the elementary schools.

More new schools were on the horizon as Putnam County entered the 21st century. Burks Middle School in Monterey and Algood School both opened in impressive new facilities for the 2001-02 school year.

In January 2003, Upperman High School in Baxter moved into a new building on the Nashville Highway. And in May 2003, Capshaw students moved into a new structure built behind the main school building that still included those first four rooms built in 1939. The older section has now been torn down, and a newer wing has been renovated.

### CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL REUNIONS

Central High School, constructed at Cookeville, TN in 1932,  
it became a Junior High School in 1966.

Herald Citizen Newspaper: Sunday, 4 July 2004

Central High School Class of 1939

<http://www.ajlambert.com>

#### 65-year reunion



● H-C Photo/Shawn Sidwell

Members of Cookeville Central High School class of 1939 gathered for a reunion on June 19 at Ryan's Steakhouse. The classmates enjoyed the food, fellowship and reminiscing. Classmates seated, from

left, are Ruth Henry Bell, Nancy Travis Jarrell, Lillie Florence Wright Dittfurth, Maymie Sue Johnson Horton, Lucille Bockman Robertson and Evelyn Mitchell Bartlett; and, standing, Billy Pedigo, Thomas Gentry, Elmer Montgomery, Charles Stanton and Jim Terry.

#### Remembering the 'good ole days'



● H-C Photo/Camille Floss

The Central High School class of 1944 gathered at Cane Creek Park on June 12 for their 60th reunion. Former students from 12 states came to renew friendships and recall school days gone by. Turning out for the occasion are, in front, from left, Lorene Keen Bussell, Dorothy DeBerry Levin, Maxine DeBerry Vaden, Mary Frances Rhea Bailey, Barbara Foster Colvin, Opal Riggs Hendrickson, Mildred Young Phillips, Estell Lee Cox, Juanita Ledbet-

ter Phillips, Gladys Countiss Presley and Wanda Winningham Chaffin; and, in back, Rosemary Reeves Brownlee, Burdett Randolph, Ann Bowling Case, Charles Gentry, Jimmy Walker, Ruth Moody Sells, Janet Draper Nelson, Audrey Ray Bullington, Gene Evelyn Matheny Warren, Nell Hix Nicholas, Juanita Ramsey Bilyeu, Hunter Hill, Helen High Smith, Mark Harris, Billy Walker, Laverne Crawford, Evelyne Flatt Stites and George Johnson.



Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN

Living: Page 6

Living: Tuesday, 29 June 2004

Friends of Barbara Foster Colvin gathered for a lunch the weekend of their Central High School class of 1944 reunion. Reminiscing about school days gone by are, from left, Colvin's sister Kay Foster, Mary Frances Rhea Bailey, Opal Riggs Hendrickson, Jo Riggs Gentry, Gene Evelyn Matheney Warren, Eudelle Newport, June Grizzard Mattson, Anne Bowling Case, Betty Lou Martin Neeley, Rosemary Reeves Browniee, Evelyn Flatt Stites, Rosemary Foutch, Helen High Smith and Colvin.



Class of 1946

These Cookeville Central High School classmates from the class of 1946 met at Serendipity Café and Bakery on July 10, 2004 for their 58<sup>th</sup> class reunion and to catch up with old friends. They are, in front, from left, Madeline Kirby King, Earlene Brown Williams, Kathleen Bohannon Bullock, Jane Ellen Huddleston Stewart, Juanita Patton, Jean Breeding Butler, Jim Bilyeu, Mary Sue Elrod Halfacre, June Williamson Pitman and Maudie Pippin Farris; and in middle, Jo Riggs Gentry, Virgil Ray Bullington, Malcolm Massey, Katherine Brown Sterling McCanless, James Buck, "Teen" Purgear, Jean Pillings Pearson, Dot McDaniel Tharp, Pat Scott McCormick, Ruth Thomas Phipps and Helen Henderson Keeney; and, in back, Zina Mitchell, Donald Sloan, Jerry Montgomery, Jane Foster Mayberry, Ray Montgomery, Charlie Cumby, Hoke White, Clarice Hargrove, Polly Lynn Garrison and Samie Hart Weisburd. Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN: Thursday, 22 July 2004.



Class of 1947

These members of Cookeville Central High School's class of 1947 also gathered at Serendipity for a reunion. They are, in front, from left, Howard Dyer, Wilma Williamson Diemer, Louise Grimes Wilson, Clarence Wilson, John Judd, Harold Grimes Wilson, Clarence Wilson, John Judd, Harold Murton Johnson, Doris Huddleston Streetman, Evelyn Apple Smith, Ted Darwin, Martha Johnson Slatter and Bette Morgan Fincher; and, in row two; Betty Hodges Brady and Nancy Clark Childress; and, in row three, Joan Walker Rogers, Margarette Yates Carter and David Johnson; and, in row four, Houston Parris, Pat McCanless and Tommye Hill Morton; and, in back, Rebecca Rogers, Sterling McCanless, Bill Jernigan and Albert Ramsey. Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN: Thursday, 22 July 2004.

## Back to the 50's



Cookeville High classes reunited

● H-C Photo/Camille Floss

### CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN  
Sunday, 18 July 2004

Members of 10 classes from the 1950's at the former Cookeville Central High School gathered recently for a reunion, sponsored by the Class of 1954, organized by this steering committee and held at the site of their alma mater, now Prescott Middle School. From left, at front, are Betty Jo Slagle Whiteaker, Class of 1959; Matt Henderson, 1954; Carole Gaw Stover, 1958; Jean Coleman Davis, 1954; Jim Ragland, 1958; Jimmy Mackie, 1951; and on the back row, Buddy Chaffin, 1954; Virginia Gaw Master, 1957; Mary Helen Saunders, 1957; Bill Masters, 1957; and Grover Bennett, 1959. More than 400 attended the event.



Class of 1963

These members of the Cookeville Central High School Class of 1963 met for their 41<sup>st</sup> class reunion on May 15, 2004 at the Holiday Inn in Cookeville., Putnam Co., TN. Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN: Thursday, 22 July 2004.

**HERALD CITIZEN NEWSPAPER: 1 AUGUST 2004**

Letter to the Editor:

Central Reunion 'wonderful'

The Cookeville Central High School 50's Reunion Committee did an excellent job organizing the July celebration. It was a wonderful experience for those of use who attended.

Many former students and teachers came and renewed old friendships. I will not attempt to name all of those who worked so hard to make this a memorable time together but I appreciate the effort they made.

Those who did not attend missed a fine opportunity to share old times as well as new.

Until we meet again, I wish all of you good health and good fortune.

By: Sue Ragland Barron, Texas



**CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1950 REUNITES:** Herald-Citizen: Friday, 26 November 2004, pg. 10.

The class of 1950 from the old Central High School met on Nov. 13 for breakfast at Shoney's. Standing, from left are, Elizabeth Smith, Bobby Gentry, Maxine Loftis, Jane Dyer, Jeff Dyer, Kay Greenwood, Potter Greenwood, Jerry Sliger, Joe Lee, Wendell Kendrick, Cecil Crawford, Bill Glenn, Jewel Glenn, Leonard Whitaker, Ralph Loftis, Bill DuBois, Dot DuBois, Hackie Newman, Pearl McCulley, Doug McCulley and Sterling McCanless; and seated, Jessie Watts, Bobbie Sliger, Amelia Kendrick, Minnie Swack, Norma Jean Hawkins, Martha Fields, Betty Newman, Maurine Patton and Patrenia McCanless. The reunited classmates ended the day with an evening meal at Serendipity Café' and Bakery.



Herald Citizen Newspaper,  
Cookeville, Putnam Co.,  
TN:  
13 August 2006, pg. C-7.



Herald Citizen Newspaper,  
Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN:  
22 December 2006, pg. A-12.

<http://www.ajlambert.com>



**DONATION TO SCHOOL LIBRARY**

The Cookeville High School Library recently received a donation to purchase library materials from the Cookeville Central High School Class of 1947. Pictured, from left, are Ginny Poteet, CHS librarian, and Mary Jane Childress and Catherine Brown, both representatives of the class of '47.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: Sunday, 28 June 2009, pg. B-6.