

Mr. & Mrs. Jere Whitson

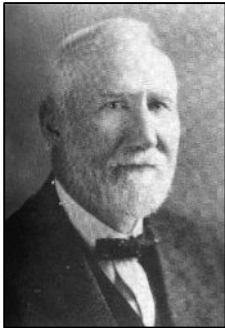
by Mrs. Rutledge Smith

Article appeared in the 30 March 1922,
edition of the Putnam County Herald.

Stray Leaves from Putnam County, TN

by Mary Hopson

pgs. 8-9



Mr. & Mrs. Jere Whitson, on the night of March 20th, celebrated the 50th anniversary of their marriage by giving a reception to which more than 400 guests were invited. Invitations were sent out to several different states, and guests responded with a display of genuine appreciation seldom experienced upon an occasion of this kind. From half past eight o'clock until after midnight the elegant home was besieged by well-wishers, including friends from the country proper and from greater distances who came to pay a personal tribute to Mr. and Mrs.

Whitson – a couple whose names, deeds, and character are inseparably linked with the development and growth of the Upper Cumberland country, where they have truly left their footprints upon the sands of half a century of time.

Jere and Mrs. Whitson, known for 50 years almost intimately both by those who have prospered and those who fell by the wayside, to whom they invariably extended a helping hand, and correctly looked upon as foremost among the guiding spirits of the progress, citizenship, and character of the period through which they have passed. Few people are better known. Still fewer are more universally liked. And there are none with better intentions or a stronger courage to work and strive for those things which go to make up the sum total of a community's happiness and contentment. The knowledge by those who attended the reception, that they were paying respect and doing courtesy to a generation of the old regime that is fast passing away, had the effect of adding an element of seriousness and sober thought to an occasion otherwise radiant with merriment of the evening.

Jere Whitson, who is now 69 years of age, is just turning his face and directing his thoughts toward the youth of old age. On his 19th birthday, March 19, 1872, he was married to Miss Parizetta Frances Terry, the handsome and intellectual daughter of John Terry, whose 19th birthday had also occurred in March of the same year. The wedding proper and festivities of the incident were staged at the Terry home, three miles north of Cookeville. Mrs. Whitson's father was the third descendant in succession from father to son who occupied the Terry home.

Fifty years ago there were no buggies in Cookeville, and those who attended the Whitson-Terry nuptials came in wagons, on horseback, and some few afoot.

Gen. Alfred Algood, a prominent and venerable attorney of the Cookeville bar, remarked on the night of the reception, that he walked to the wedding 50 years ago, while his sister, Miss Mary Algood, and another young lady, rode "double" on horseback, and that on the way, his sister handed him her sash to carry. When he had arrived at his journey's end, and was called on to produce the sash, it could not be found for a long while, but after diligent search the missing sash was located in the top of one of his boots where it had lodged in safety. Shoes at that time were not looked upon as the acme of good taste and refinement. Gen. Algood also referred to the fact that while the Whitson-Terry wedding took place before the advent of the buggy in this section, and in spite of Jere Whitson's activities during the past 25 years in selling buggies in this and adjoining counties, not one was used in bringing guests to the golden anniversary, but autos were parked for blocks around the Whitson home. Capt. Walton Smith, father of Maj. Rutledge Smith, owned the first buggy brought to Cookeville, TN.

In 1869, Mr. Whitson, then a lad of but 16 years, secured employment in the general store of Freeze and Mills, the establishment being more generally known under the name of J.C. Freeze, the location being on the public square where the First National bank now stands. It was a frame structure. The territory from which trade was drawn, although not virgin in the stricter sense, was undeveloped, and there was but a few stores in the rural districts. Putnam County proper was established in 1854, one year after Mr. and Mrs. Whitson were born. Opportunities for educational advantages, even such as the undeveloped country then afforded, were interfered with by the Civil War, and Mr. Whitson owes his advancement in the field of letters to his own diligent efforts and to a dogged tenacity of character.

Soon tiring of work by assignment of another, Mr. Whitson decided to venture out upon his own resources, and with that purpose in view he established a country store in Jackson County in 1871, and later in 1872 with J. Hamp Moored, opened a general store in Cookeville, TN. The store ordinarily carried goods amounting to not more than \$3,500. His dry goods came from Hugh Douglas and Co., notions from Cowan and Co., and hats from Cock Settle Co. There were hauled in wagons by way of the Trousdale Ferry Pike, thence to Cookeville, the round trip requiring from seven to eight days, freight charges being fixed at one dollar per hundred pounds. These were regular teamsters who could be engaged without difficulty. Occasionally during the high water season, consignments would be sent by boat to Gainesboro and hauled from there to Cookeville, but when the N.C. and St. Louis Railway built into Sparta, the routing gradually changed. Cookeville did not have railway facilities until 1890 at which time the old Nashville and Knoxville was projected into Cookeville.

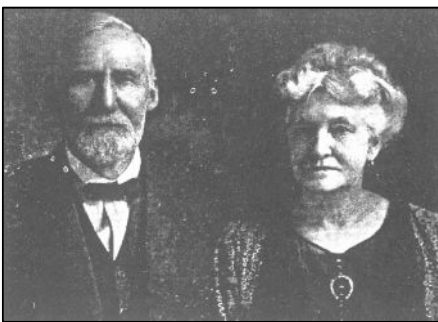
Soon after their marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Jere Whitson secured rooms in a residence built directly on the square. The home was owned by J.M. Douglas, father of Esq. J. R. Douglas of Cookeville. In 1875, Mr. and Mrs. Whitson moved

to Jeremiah, where Mr. Whitson conducted a successful mercantile business for 15 years. He recalls that in 1866-67 a sensational oil find was made on Spring Creek. The liquid gold, as promoters of today would term it, having been found at a depth of from 80 to 250 feet. No provisions had been made to care for the oil, and the vast quantities floated down Spring Creek. An attempt was made to haul it by wagon to Butler's Landing, also to McMinnville, but this did not prove profitable, and the field was temporarily abandoned. At a later period when attempts were made to revive the flow, it was found that the holes had not been plugged and that the field was water soaked.

Mr. Whitson moved with his family back to Cookeville in 1890, and in 1896 established the general hardware and furniture store which is still being operated on a large scale today. He also for many years, dealt extensively in high grade combination horses, some of which were purchased from the famous bluegrass fields of Kentucky.

Mr. Whitson always takes a prominent and effective part in all undertakings having for their purpose the betterment of Cookeville, the advancement of its educational facilities, its moral tone, and its political cleanliness. He has been a fighter from the day he was born, and it is not at all likely that he intends to surrender this essential characteristic of his makeup merely because the shades of evening are beginning to settle about him. Although recognizing the inevitable shadows, he still feels that a man who is merely "going on" 70, has plenty of usefulness reserved, and he will undoubtedly be found on the main platform for many years to come.

Mr. and Mrs. Whitson have three sons and two daughters; also four grandchildren. They have never had a death in their immediate family. The children presented their mother with a handsome platinum-mounted diamond pin, and gave their father exquisite gold remembrances. Scores of gold and silver presents, sent and brought by friends, were on display, and also scores of congratulatory telegrams and letters were received during the day.



Mr. & Mrs. Jere Whitson
Picture taken from the book, "A History of Putnam County by Walter S. McClain, pg. 133.

Jeremiah "Jere" Whitson, born one mile south of Cookeville, TN on March 19, 1853. On March 19, 1972, he married Miss Parizetta Frances Terry. When but a lad of sixteen years he struck out for himself and secured employment in the store of Freeze & Mills. He established a small general store of his own in Jackson County, TN in 1871, but soon sold it and, in 1872, associated with J.H. Moore, opened a general store in Cookeville, TN. In 1875, Mr. Whitson moved to Jeremiah and entered upon a prosperous career. Moving back to Cookeville in 1890, Mr. Whitson soon became actively identified with every worthy public movement and has continued to be one of our foremost citizens. The Jere Whitson Hardware Co., established in 1896 does a large business, wholesale and retail. Mr. Whitson has also engaged extensively in farming and real estate with characteristic success. In politics he is a Democrat, but has never held public office, although always an active party worker. An elder and recognized leader in the Church of Christ. The founding of Dixie College was due primarily to his earnest and persistent labor.

Article taken from the book, "A History of Putnam County by Walter S. McClain, pg. 133.



Mrs. Jere Whitson, seated, is shown with her children. Seated on the left is John Holland Whitson, who md Myrtle Isbell; and on the right is Walter Lee Whitson. Standing from the left: Mary Alice Whitson who md Robert Witherspoon Lowe; Harvey Thurman Whitson who md Bulah Adcock; and Frances Lucinda Whitson who md William Benton Carlen.

Picture courtesy of Billy Carlen



The Harvey Thurman Whitson Family
Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN
Sunday, April 18, 2004-Page B-3
Photo TTU Archives

The Cookeville Family posing for a formal portrait in their home are: Mr. & Mrs. H.T. Whitson and their children, Mary Frances and Jere B. Whitson. The photo was taken in their home on Washington Avenue in 1915. Taken by Harding Studios.

Harvey Thurman Whitson – b. 18 August 1887, TN – d. 18 January 1982
md Bula Adcock – b. 21 November 1889 – d. 27 April 1967
Both Buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN

Mary Frances Whitson – b. 1 July 1911 – d. 1 June 1927
Buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN

Census Place: 1880 District 15. Putnam Co., Tennessee

Dwl: 43 Family: 43

Source: FHL Film 1255275 National Archives Film T9-1275 Page 130C

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
Jese WHITSON	Self	M	M	W	27	TN
Occ:	Gen. Merchandising		Fa: TN	Mo: TN		
Parizetta WHITSON	Wife	F	M	W	27	TN
Occ:	Keeping House		Fa: TN	Mo: TN		
John H. WHITSON	Son	M	S	W	4	TN
			Fa: TN	Mo: TN		
Walter L. WHITSON	Son	M	S	W	2	TN
			Fa: TN	Mo: TN		
Alex BARNES	Other	M		W	21	TN
Occ:	Clerk In Store		Fa: TN	Mo: TN		
Elisha BULL	Other	M		W	31	TN
Occ:	Laborer		Fa: ---	Mo: ---		
Edward BILLBREY	Other	M		W	20	TN
Occ:	Laborer		Fa: TN	Mo: TN		
Frank ADKINS	Other	M		W	17	TN
Occ:	Laborer		Fa: TN	Mo: TN		
Mary CARR	Other	F	S	W	13	TN
Occ:	Servant		Fa: TN	Mo: TN		

Jeremiah "Jere" Whitson was the s/o John Walter Whitson and Lucinda H. Barnes Whitson. He was md to Parizetta Frances Terry. Jere Whitson donated twelve acres of land upon which the University of Dixie was built. He also led forces which resulted in building the University which later became Tennessee Polytechnic & then Tennessee Technological University.

Jere Whitson
b. 19 March 1853, TN
d. 1 August 1928

md
Parizetta Frances (Terry) Whitson
b. 4 March 1853, TN
d. 25 February 1947

Both Buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN
*See Chapter 8, *Minerva Tennessee Huddleston for family listings.*

John Howard/Holland Whitson
b. 16 April 1876, TN
d. 27 April 1968

md
Myrtle Isbell Whitson
b. 27 August 1884 – d. 2 January 1968
Both Buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN

Walter Lee Whitson
b. 24 February, TN
d. 12 July 1965
Buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN

William Benton Carlen
b. 28 August 1895
d. 9 November 1979
md
Frances "Fanalou" "Fanny" Lucinda Whitson
b. 1 May 1897, Cookeville, TN
d. 19 March 1987
Both Buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN

Mary Alice Whitson
b. 1893 – d. 1980
md
Robert Witherspoon Lowe
b. 5 September 1891 – d. 12 March 1956
Both Buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN

Census: 1900 – 1st Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 474 Family: 484 Line: 98

Whitson, Jere Head W M March 1858 42 Married (27 yrs. married) Merchant TN TN TN

Whitson, Parizetta F. Wife W F March 1858 42 Married (27 yrs. married) (5 children born, 5 children living TN TN TN

Whitson, John H. Son M W April 1876 24 Single Merchant TN TN TN

Whitson, Walter L. Son M W February 1878 22 Single Merchant TN TN TN

Whitson, Harvey T. Son M W August 1887 12 Single At School TN TN TN

Whitson, Mary Alice Dau F W July 1893 6 Single TN At School TN TN

Whitson, Fannie Lou Dau F W May 1897 3 Single TN TN TN

Pendergrass, Samuel Servant M W September 1876 23 Single TN TN TN

Dowell, Melvin D. Boarder M W July 1857 42 Single TN TN TN

Keeton, Hilrey Servant F B May 1872 28 Single TN TN TN

Census: 1910 - 1st Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN – Cookeville Town

Dwl: 115 Family: 119

Whitson, Jere Head M W 57 Married1 (38 yrs. married) Merchant Retail Hardward TN TN TN

Whitson, Parizetta F. Wife F W 57 Married1 (38 yrs. married) (5 children born, 5 children living) TN TN TN

Whitson, John H. Son M W 34 Single Merchant Dry Goods Store TN TN TN

Whitson, Walter L. Son M W 32 Single Merchant Dry Goods Store TN TN TN

Whitson, Thurman Son M W 22 Single Merchant Lumber TN TN TN

Whitson, Mary A. Dau F W 16 Single TN TN TN

Whitson, Fannie L. Dau F W 12 Single TN TN TN

Young, Minnie F W 22 Single Servant Private Family TN US US

Census: 1910 - 1st Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 115 Family: 120

Ford, James F. Head M W 39 Married1 (13 yrs. married) US Inspector Cattle TN VA TN

Ford, Nellie Wife F W 33 F W 33 Married1 (13 yrs. married) (2 children born, 2 children living) MN OH NY

Ford, Gladis Dau F W 12 Single TN TN MN

Ford, Charles Son M W 10 Single TN TN MN

Wirt, Alvin Father-in-Law M W 71 Married1 (52 yrs. married) Laborer Bottling Works OH PA OH

Wirt, Kate Mother-in-Law F W 69 Married1 (52 yrs. married) (4 children born, 4 children living) NY NY NY

Census: 1910 - 1st Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 116 Family: 121

Ford, Cora Head F W 50 Single Seamstress At Home TN VA TN

Ranchfuss, Nan D. Sister F W 32 Widow (2 children born, 0 children living) Own Income TN VA TN

Census: 1920 – 1st Dist. Putnam Co., TN – Tennessee Polytechnical Institute

Dwl: 199 Family: 230 Line: 10

Whitson, Jere Head M W 66 Married Merchant Hardware TN TN TN

Whitson, Parizetta F. Wife F W 66 Married TN TN TN

Whitson, John H. Son M W 43 Merchant Hardware TN TN TN

Whitson, Walter Son M W 41 Merchant Hardware TN TN TN

Carlen, Frances Dau F W 22 Married TN TN TN

Carlen, Benton Son-in-Law M W 24 Married Manager Roller Mill TN TN TN

Vaden, Altha Sister F W 59 TN TN TN

Kinnard, C. Employee M W 16 Farm Laborer TN TN TN

Census: 1920 - Erlanger, Kenton, KY

Dwl: 170 Family: 181 Line: 39

Whitson, H. Thurman Head M W 33 Married Manager Lumber TN TN TN

Whitson, Bula Wife F W 31 Married TN TN TN

Whitson, Mary F. Dau. F W 8 Single TN TN TN

Whitson, Jere B. Son M W 6 Single TN TN TN

Census: 1930 – 1st Dist. Putnam Co., TN – Cookeville East of Walnut Street

Dwl: 98 Family: 102 Line: 12

Whitson, Parizetta F. Head Owns (has a radio) F W 77 Widow (19 yrs. old 1st marriage) TN TN TN

Whitson, Walter Son M W 52 Single Merchant Hardware TN TN TN

Whitson, Thurman Son M W 43 Married (23 yrs. old 1st marriage) Merchant Lumber TN TN TN

Whitson, Beulah Daughter-in-Law F W 42 Married (20 yrs. old 1st marriage) TN TN TN

Whitson, Jere Grandson M W 16 Single TN TN TN

Whitson, Jean? Granddaughter F W 4 Single TN TN TN

Vaden, Altha Sister-in-Law F W 69 Widow (30 yrs. old 1st marriage) TN TN TN

Bray, Magnolia Servant F W 29 Single Cook Private Family TN TN TN

Census: 1930 – 1st Dist. Putnam Co., TN – Cookeville East of Walnut Street

Dwl: 100 Family: 104 Line: 25

Pendergrass, Samuel Head Owns M W 53 (25 yrs. old 1st marriage) Merchant Hardware TN TN TN

Pendergrass, Nell Wife FW 50 (22 yrs. old 1st marriage) KY TN TN

1860 census, 1st Civil Dist., post office Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN

Terry, John 44 M W Farmer (value of real estate, 3,000) (value of personal estate, 2,000) TN
Terry, Francis 43 F W TN
Terry, Asberry 26 M W Farmer TN
Terry, Sarah 21 F W TN
Terry, John 18 M W TN
Terry, Harriett 14 F W TN
Terry, Whitley 11 M W TN
Terry, Lee 9 M W TN
Terry, Payette 7 F W TN
Terry, Mary 4 F W TN
Terry, Wesley 2/12 M W TN

Census: 1870 – 1st Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 64 Family: 64

Terry, John 55 M W (value of real estate, 2,000) (value of personal estate, 2,000) Farmer TN
Terry, Frances A. 53 F W Keeps House TN
Terry, Lee R. 19 M W Works Farm TN
Terry, Parsetta F. 17 F W At Home TN (*Parizetta Frances Terry md Jeremiah "Jere" Whitson*)
Terry, Mary J. 14 F W At Home TN
Terry, Harvy J. 10 M W TN
McKenney Frank 25 M B Farm Labor TN

Census Place: 1880 District 1, Putnam Co., Tennessee

Dwl: 122 Family: 122

Source: FHL Film 1255275 National Archives Film T9-1275 Page 84C

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
John TERRY	Self	M	M	W	65	TN
Occ:	Farmer	Fa: TN	Mo: TN			
Frances A. TERRY	Wife	F	M	W	60	TN
Occ:	Keeping House	Fa: TN	Mo: TN			
Harvy TERRY	Son	M		W	20	TN
Occ:	Works On Farm	Fa: TN	Mo: TN			
A.W. S.	Other	F		W	14	TN
Occ:	Boarder	Fa: TN	Mo: TN			

1900 census 1st Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 483 Family 493

Terry, Joel W. H. Head 40 M W b. April 1860 M1 (14 yrs. md) Farmer TN TN TN
Terry, Nancy M. Wife 32 F W b. September 1867 M1 (14 yrs. md) (5 children born, 5 children living) TN TN TN
Terry, Lena W. Dau 11 F W b. August 1888 Single At School TN TN TN
Terry, Jerry H. Son 10 M W December 1889 Single At School TN TN TN
Terry, Harvey B. Son 8 M W March 1892 Single At School TN TN TN
Terry, John W. Son 2 M W June 1897 Single TN TN TN
Terry, Walter Lee Son 4/12 January 1900 Single TN TN TN
Terry, Frances A. Mother 82 F W b. December 1817 Widow (14 children born, 9 children living) TN TN TN
Moore, Haskel H. Nephew 19 M W b. July 1880 Single Farmer TN TN TN

HISTORY MUSEUM CELEBRATES JERE WHITSON

By Amy Davis

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 14 April 2013, front page & page 2:

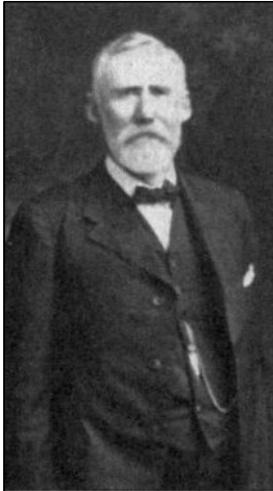
COOKEVILLE – A school and even a funeral home bear his name.

More than a century ago, a hardware store did, too.

And that well-known Cookeville name – Jere Whitson – will be celebrated by the Cookeville History Museum with the opening of a new exhibit Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

The exhibit, entitled “Jere Whitson Hardware: Equipping a Generation,” will showcase the man – a prominent community leader and business man of his day – who left his mark in history after making Cookeville his permanent home in 1890.

“Jere Whitson and his family equipped a whole generation of Cookevillians,” Judy Duke, administrator of Cookeville museums, said, referring to the hardware and dry goods stores his family operated through the late 180s and early 1900s.



Jere Whitson

In addition to running his store, Whitson had either owned or operated a bank, grocery store, lumberyard, gristmill, livery stable and funeral home during his lifetime. He was also active in school and charitable affairs and was a member of the Church of Christ. He even had a hand in the early days of Dixie College, having served as chairman of the board of directors for the school that was to become Tennessee Tech University.

“It’s not so much the man we’re honoring as it is his influence in the community,” Duke said.

The idea for the exhibit came after Duke was contacted last year by a Mt. Juliet family who said they had a buggy the museum might be interested in buying – a buggy with a small plaque on the back that says “Jere Whitson Hardware, Cookeville, Tenn.”



The one-horse buggy, with its spindly wheels and peeling black paint, dates back to 1910.

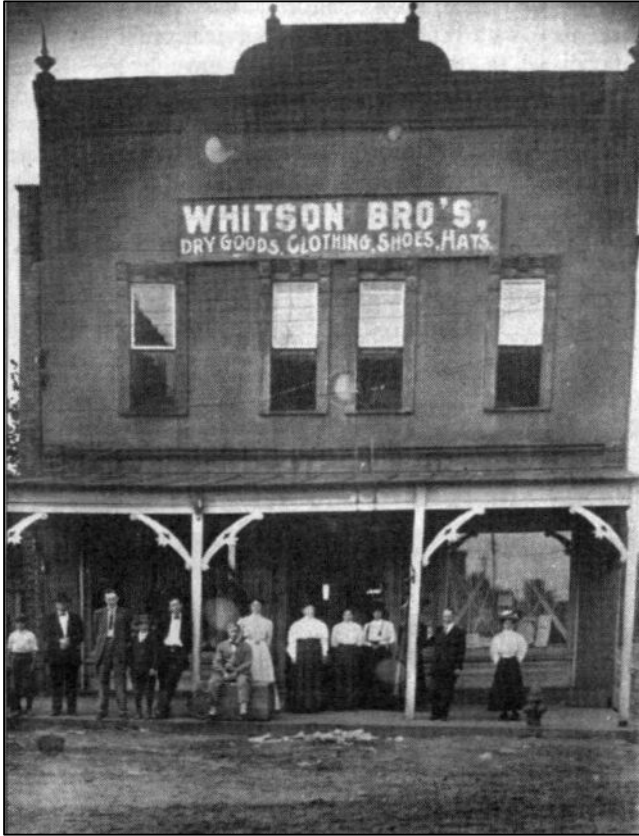
“My heart just turned upside down,” Duke said. “I thought, ‘Oh, how

fabulous!’”

Since that time the buggy had been in storage – but not anymore.

“It’s been moved into the museum, and it takes up all of one side of the front room,” Duke said. “It’s a one-horse buggy, but its still bit.”

In addition to the buggy, the exhibit will feature items that would have been sold in the stores operated by Whitson and later his sons.



“We had other things from the Jere Whitson Hardware store that people had donated over the years as a gift to the museum,” Duke said.

“I’m hoping people can see what Cookeville would have looked like in the late 180s and early 190s and on up through the century. The Whitsons sold everything from clocks to lamps to dishes to caskets – the whole nine yards. They were meeting and equipping Cookevillians.”

(Pictured Cookevillians gather at Whitson Bro’s in 1915. The dry goods store was operated by Jere Whitson’s sons on the courthouse square on the corner of Broad and Jefferson. Whitson’s first store – Jere Whitson Hardware – opened in 1896).

She welcomes members of the community to enjoy refreshments at the exhibit opening on Tuesday.

The museum is open Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 40 E. Broad St.

The new exhibit will continue through July 13. For more information call: (931)-520-5455.

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



A view inside Whitson Brothers dry goods store around 1915.