

WAY BACK WHEN: LOOKING BACK IN HISTORY
Happenings in the Cookeville area as recorded in the pages of the
Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN.

By Bob McMillian

1900's

(Compiled by Audrey J. Lambert)

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1903

(February 1, 1903) Cookeville has a new newspaper, the Putnam County Herald.

Editor Elmer Wirt writes, "The paper makes no bombastic promises, but will do what it can in its humble way to build up the schools and churches of the community; foster every legitimate business enterprise; record faithfully and truthfully as possible the happenings of interest; in short do what it can towards making the community better, morally, intellectually, socially financially."

Also, in that first issue, Wirt wrote an editorial endorsing the incorporation of Cookeville. First incorporated in 1856, voters 'unincorporated' the town in 1879 during a wave of prohibitionism sweeping the country.

At that time a quirk in state law made towns the only place in Tennessee where liquor could legally be sold and saloons flourished in Cookeville.

By 1903, the state's Four Mile Law — which banned liquor sales within four miles of a school in rural areas — had been altered to include towns as well and Wirt wrote that the day had arrived for Cookeville to legally become a town again. It would allow schools, streets, and improvements. "With the town incorporated, a school district, embraced within our corporate limits, and nine months of free school in our magnificent college building, Cookeville would blossom like a rose," Wirt wrote.

(March 4, 1903) The vote was held last week on the incorporation question: 104 for, 2 against.

Wirt writes, "For some occult reason, a minority of voters stood around on street corners in the mud, looked wise, and refused to vote, claiming that two-thirds of the people were opposed to incorporating.

As a result, the Tennessee Central Railroad has agreed to locate it's division here and will spend \$25,000 on tracks, depots, roundhouses shops and other improvements.

(March 18, 1903) Mrs. S.R. Shanks has had a new-fangled street lamp put up in front of the Duke House. "The lamp throws a very brilliant light and is a welcome improvement to night pedestrians, especially during this present reign of mud," Wirt comments.

(April 15, 1903) Cookeville is now officially incorporated. Word reached town that both houses in Nashville have passed the bill.

(April 29, 1903) Wirt, a staunch prohibitionist, writes, "Last Thursday saw the final closing of Putnam County's only saloon and we hope for a better state of affairs as a result."

(May 19, 1903) "The city council met last Friday night but did little in the way of business. They decided to communicate with several towns that have been incorporated for some time and secure copies of their ordinances in order that they can profit from the experience of others in framing laws for Cookeville."

(July 8 1903) The position of Putnam County Attorney was created this week as a result of a mass meeting called by the Herald for "getting matters in shape to successfully fight against the illegal and open sale of whiskey and its train of following evils."

In that meeting, the crowd elected O.K. Holladay chairman and Wirt secretary of the prohibitionist group.

Meanwhile, the Putnam County Quarterly Court was in session as they met and the prohibitionists voted to send five men there to petition the court to elect a county attorney so that "a person clothed in the power and majesty of law could be ready at all times to prosecute offenses." **Holladay** was named County Attorney by the court.

(July 29, 1903) Wirt spent a Sunday afternoon in Monterey after not being there for a year. He writes, "We hardly knew the place had grown to such an extent. Several business houses have been put up and many residences have been erected.

"The most important structure now going up is the brick business block of Gen. Wilder, which J.F. Scott of Cookeville has the contract. Two fine storerooms will be finished as soon as possible and two more next spring at a cost of \$5,000.

"The school board has decided to have ten months of school and the building is being put into shape. This will add many families to the permanent population."

(August 12, 1903) The Jackson County Board of Health has declared a quarantine blocking cattle from Putnam and Overton Counties and forbidding anyone from driving any cattle into Jackson County from the two counties.

Wirt notes, "This action seems superfluous inasmuch as Jackson County is included in the federal quarantine against Texas fever.

(August 23, 1905) John Farris, Mat Langsford, Tom Harris and Isaac Hix of Putnam County have all been granted state pensions as ex-Confederate soldiers, the newspaper reported this week.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Elizabeth Patrick of Monterey was one of 165 widows of Confederate soldiers recently granted state pensions.

(September 2, 1903) A front page ad this week announced the sale of 50 large residence lots by Jere Whitson and Dr. J.F. Dyer. The site is "centrally located between east and west Cookeville on the best elevated part of town."

The ad boasts that Cookeville is now incorporated and has a new and up-to-date school building heated by hot air and a nine-month school year. It's free to youngsters living in the corporate limits of Cookeville.

(October 21, 1903) Wirt writes that Morgan Bros Produce is getting ready to ship out 500,000 pounds of dried apples from Cookeville and Algood.

(December 2, 1903) The Tennessee Central Railroad is now in operation from Nashville to Clarksville and trains will run through in a few days to Hopkinsville.

(December 16, 1903) Gen. Wilder's brick building is nearing completion in Monterey and will be occupied by the first of the year by the Bank of Monterey, the post office, and T.E. Goff's drug store. The General has bought the rest of the lots on the block and plans to build brick buildings there too for a wholesale grocery, an ironworks, a machine shop and a supply house.

(December 23, 1903) Wirt writes of news from Baxter. "The people have decided to have law and order. A committee met there last night and made arrangements to pay a deputy sheriff to stay there. Hope we will have a better time than we have had."

1904

(January 6, 1904) The TCR suffered a \$300,000 loss last week when a blaze gutted its shop buildings in Nashville. Closer to home, editor Elmer Wirt notes that the railroad's water tank "in that bustling city of Monterey" burned last week too — while full of water.

Wirt asks "What kind of water do they have at Monterey?"

(January 13, 1904) Wirt, a tireless crusader for public sidewalks in Cookeville, writes, "Pedestrians have had a hard time trying to keep from swearing while skating around in the mud where sidewalks ought to be these past few days."

(March 2, 1904) Rural mail delivery begins in Putnam County.

Wirt writes, "Cookeville is putting on airs over the starting Tuesday of six rural free delivery routes from our post office.

"Everything went smoothly and people generally put up boxes."

Those first six routes and their mail carriers are: Route 1, to Algood, Judd, Venia, Selby, Avoton, and Waterloo. Bynum Greenwood, carrier. Route 2, to Hudgens, Ditty, and Windowcliff. C.A. Reagan, carrier. Route 3, to Shipley, Quiz and Selena. Walter Smith, carrier. Route 4, by way of Geo. Judd's store to Leon, back via the Gainesboro Grade. Joe Morgan, carrier. Route 5, out Sparta Road to Newark, then back along Bunker Hill Road. Hartford Johnson, carrier. Route 6, to Goffton, up Dry Valley to John Jackson's and back via Jernigan. Arthur Johnson, carrier.

Carriers leave Cookeville Post Office each morning at 7:30 a.m. and return in the evening.

(March 23, 1904) Wirt appeals to readers: "I would like to make the Herald eight pages every week. To do so I must have a larger press."

He says if 100 or more friends will donate \$10 each, "I can get the press and give you a better paper."

(April 30, 1904) The Armitage brothers of Overton County passed through here on a trip back from Nashville this week and discussed their plans for the Overton County Railroad.

"This is a much larger enterprise than it appears to be on the surface," say the editor Elmer Wirt.

The brothers are still waiting for Overton County to approve bonds to build it. The line would connect with the Cincinnati Southern in Kentucky near Somerset. Wirt comments that it would be good for Overton. The TCR paid \$7,000 in taxes here last year. Taxes would more than pay of the cost of the bonds, he said.

There were more than 300 students in school here last week. "A very good showing for this time of year," says Wirt. Four more weeks of classes remain until the term closes.

(September 6, 1904) Editor Elmer Wirt writes this week that there's troop news: "The First Tennessee regiment will pass through Cookeville on the TC railroad this week. Blanchard Duke of Monterey will go with the town band to the army maneuvers in Virginia."

He also reports, "A steel bridge is being built across the Caney Fork at the Trousdale Ferry."

And finally, in a page one not, he tells readers that Ed Bussell, who's been charged with running a saloon at Double Springs illegally, escaped from jail here Wednesday night and has so far eluded captured.

(September 14, 1904) Editor Elmer Wirt writes in this week's edition that Estill Capshaw and Algood Carlen left this week for Knoxville where they will enter the University of Tennessee.

And Virgil Baker, who is a cadet at Annapolis Naval Academy was home for a visit with his parents, Dr. and Mrs. W. W. Baker. He expects to graduate next spring.

Meanwhile, H. Leo Boles has concluded a protracted tent meeting in town this week and reports several new additions to the church.

Finally Wirt comments, "We notice with pleasure the material on the ground for sidewalks from the Depot to the Square." Wirt has commented regularly on the town's muddy conditions.

1905

(June 7, 1905) Wirt to readers: "I want \$500 to put in new machinery for the Herald office. Is there a man in Putnam County who will loan that amount of money, or five men \$100 each for two years at ten cents? I have invested \$700 in the office so far.

"The Herald is no experiment, as it has run successfully for two years and four months while my printing office has been run for five and a half years. With Cookeville growing rapidly I am confident of greater success than ever if I can get the machinery to handle the business."

(August 2, 1905) Editor Elmer Wirt reports on progress in town this week. He writes, "The city has received a good road grading machine, which is on exhibition at the courthouse."

Meanwhile, "Inside work is being pushed on The People's Bank and it is being rapidly completed. D. L. Dow is president, Dr. H. C. Martin is vice president and J. E. Conger is cashier," Wirt reports.

Elsewhere on page one this week, Wirt notes, "The Cookeville Roller Mills are running day and night now."

(August 9, 1905) A. P. Barnes, secretary of the Cookeville Fair, tells readers the fair scheduled for September 28-30 will be the best ever. There'll be premiums on livestock and produce, and one of the highlights will be a parade of premium stock every day. The fair will also boast open air concerts and plenty of good water, said Barnes.

The Tennessee Central Railroad will see tickets from "all points around" to Cookeville, with one fare for a round trip, he said.

(August 23, 1905) John Farris, Mat Langsford, Tom Harris and Isaac Hix of Putnam County have all been granted state pensions as ex-Confederate soldiers.

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(August 30, 1905) Sam Pendergrass, the genial clerk in Whitson & Barnes Hardware Co's store met with a serious accident one morning this week.

"A heavy hatchet fell off a shelf and stuck Sam's foot in such a manner as to almost completely sever the little toe. Sam is getting along as well as could be expected," writes editor Elmer Wirt.

Haag's Mighty Circus is coming to town. The newspaper advertisement for the show reads: "World champion leapers, tumblers, vaulters and a school of fear-defying athletes. A monster caravan of wild and rare animals." Admission is 25 and 35 cents.

(September 13, 1905) County health officer Zeb L. Shipley, M.D., tells readers: "Owing to an epidemic of yellow fever in several of the southern cities and since rigid quarantine rules are being enforced, it will save all those who intend to travel much trouble and delay to secure a health certificate before leaving home."

1907

(March 6, 1907) Cookeville is to have a band. A 'coronet' band has been organized in this city with 21 members. C.A. Reagan is president. O.E. Cameron is secretary and L.P. Shanks is treasurer.

Members include M.T. Davis, L.P. Shanks, C.N. Gracey, Carl Dorman, W.A. Wirt, Ben Clark, O.E. Cameron, Fred Myers, C.A. Reagan, A.M. Johnson, Birch Wilcox, W.D. Ferrell, H.G. McGregor, W.R. Carlen, F.E. Collier, E.B. Duke, Cecil Elrod, Jefferson Wall, H. Algood, Henry West and W.H. Chapin.

(March 13, 1907) "Tuesday morning, a team belonging to Sid Johnson ran away with disastrous results," Wirt writes. "Starting near the Southern depot, the frightened horses dashed up East Street, running into a tree near the residence of Elmore Judd and so badly injuring one of the horses that it had to be killed.

(April 17, 1907) Five railcars of poultry shipped out of Cookeville on Thursday and even this large of a consignment caused little comment, notes Wirt. "This city is one of the biggest poultry shipping points in the state."

(August 22, 1907) A new city ordinance prohibits the impoundment of pigs less than 75 feet from any city street. Also, it allows no more than one pig per 1,000 square feet, except in cases where they are kept for immediate shipment. The penalty is \$2 per pig, but not more than \$50.

(October 3, 1907) Fire wiped out five business houses on the west side of the Square this week. It was the worst fire in years.

Lost were Henry Algood's drugstore, the Carlen and Gracey pool room, Cookeville Theater Co, a moving picture show, and the Bockman and Byrant law office. The only insurance on the burned premises was a small amount covering the pool tables.

The corner buildings — the Duke block and the law offices of Algood and Finley, were saved and are all that's left on that side of the square.

The fire originated in the theater while a group of school kids were watching a film. All escaped safely through back entrance, the front being barred by flames. Operator Tom Kirby was burned on the hands and Marshall Ray, who was working in the ticket booth, was injured on the arm.

1908

(January 8, 1908) George W. Nackles, secretary and treasurer for the Cookeville City Cemetery, gives the cemetery report for 1907 on page one this week.

The cemetery earned and spent \$54.20 during the year. It earned \$2.50 on the sale of lots and \$9.80 on the sale of hay from the property. The Civic League also donated \$25,000. It spent \$32.85 on labor, \$7.20 for grass seed, \$11.50 for fertilizer and \$2.65 on tools.

Seventeen were laid to rest during 1907, and the total there now stands at 267.

Nackles notes that gravedigger John White will dig graves for children under 12 for \$2, and charges \$2.50 for everyone else.

(April 29, 1908) General John T. Wilder is on another building spree in Monterey. He's presently building a block of five brick or concrete building houses and a 'handsome' 30-room hotel, says Wirt.

Also, 30 residences are under construction in Monterey and a 'railroad' YMCA is going up. Concrete sidewalks are being laid on both sides of Commercial Avenue and electric lights are expected to be installed later this year.

(July 8, 1908) Congressman Cordell Hull had introduced legislation to mark the route of "the great stage road known as Walton Road" with monuments and markers.

The resolution notes. "Whereas the US authorized in the late 18th Century the laying out of a road beginning at a fort at the Southwest Point, at what is now Clark Springs in eastern Hawkins County, crossing the Cumberland Mountains, penetrating the Cumberland Valley and ending at a point near Nashville, which when completed was traveled by the hearty people who settled Middle Tennessee and onto West Tenn.

"And whereas there were many battles with the Indians in creating this road and that renders it historically important," the state will spend \$10,000 for monuments marking the route of "The Great Stage Road."

(Sept. 9, 1908) City school opened this week with a record enrollment of 350. Faculty this year includes Supt. T.K. Sisk, who doubles as teacher, Mrs. B.G. Adcock, Annie Myers, Nannie Love, Carrie Gore, Mrs. Martin Dowell, Mollie Mooneyham, Tula Adcock. Also, Virginia Myers will teach elocution, Fannie Kuykendall, art, and Miss Morgan, Mrs. Tom Daniels and Ova Boyd, music.

1909

(March 27, 1909) The push is on to improve roads across America, and in Putnam County, pikes are the big thing. But there's resistance to spending to build them.

Under a headline reading, "Good Roads Make A Good County, Good Roads Mean Progress And Prosperity," Wirt asks, "If pikes are not a good thing, why are some of our most progressive farmers moving to Williamson, Davidson and White Counties to be on them?"

He tells of a farmer taking wagon of good to Sparta. "When he got to the pike six miles from Sparta his mules were wet with sweat and almost worn out.

"After getting on the pike they struck a trot and kept it up until Sparta and were in better shape when they got there than they were when they struck the pike.

"On the return home he made six miles in 40 minutes and about the same to make the next mile. He left home against the pike — he is now for them."

(April 1, 1909) By a 200 vote majority, the referendum to issue \$150,000 in county road bonds passed in Putnam County.

(April 20, 1909) A windstorm "of great cyclonic power" did \$15,000 in Cookeville and immediate vicinity this week.

Traveling northeast, it first hit the corn cribs and warehouse at the Cookeville Roller Mills. Then it demolished the Web & Crawford Planning Mill and damaged Fred White's house, taking all his trees.

Next it destroyed barn of C.H. Whitney and injured Joe Morgan's horse so badly it had to be shot. Then it struck a block of homes, throwing Amos Morgan, Rufus Bennett and Phil Rash's homes off their foundations. Bob White's house was completely destroyed, but it was vacant at the time of the storm, as was the destroyed P.M. Smith house.

T.J. Gregory's "beautiful yard and grounds" were destroyed by falling trees. Bob Greenwood's house was "twisted up" and a house being built for J.B. Barnes was ruined.

A house owned by A.A. Reagan, occupied by J.B. Thompson, was destroyed, as was the home of 'the Widow Kirby.' The shed at the fairgrounds was also blown down and many trees were destroyed.

(October 21, 1909) Wirt writes, "Some lying skunks are circulating reports that the Herald is about to suspend.

"Bless your souls, why should it? It has a circulation twice that of any other paper in the county, has a large and constantly increasing advertising support and the best print job patronage ever given an office in this section. Suspend? NO.

"We are now arranging to buy the fastest job press ever made and expect by January 1 to have a splendid new cylinder press upon which to print the Herald. There may soon be a newspaper death in Cookeville but mind you, the Herald will preach the funeral instead of being the corpse."

1914

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN:

12 March 1914

D. B. BURGESS

b. 25 December 1880, Knoxville, TN – d. 6 December 1931

Wife: Etta (Nickles) Burgess md 9 September 1911, Putnam Co., TN

b. 24 October 1888 – d. 7 October 1941

Both Buried: Lovelady Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN

Proprietor of One of the Most Popular Patronized Places in Cookeville –
Meat Market, Groceries, Restaurant
Putnam County Herald, Thursday, 12 March 1914

Mr. D. B. Burgess was born December 25, 1879 on a farm near Knoxville in East Tennessee and resided in Sparta for a period of twenty-one years and was then engaged in the meat market and restaurant business for two years. Four years ago he decided to cast his lot with the good people of Cookeville, which covers the period of time he has been engaged in business here. Mr. Burgess' place of business is located off the north side of court square where he is engaged in feeding the local family groceries fresh meats and restaurant service. His slaughtering practices are located one mile east of town in order to carry out the dictates of sanitary laws. Mr. Burgess slaughters only native cattle, hogs and sheep, and by so doing is enabled to select none but the very best for his customers and as a result of this fact the housewives of this community compliment him very highly on the quality of his fresh meats. Delivery is one of the popular features of the business. Mr. Burgess is a young man of energy and perseverance, and very deserving of all good things that might come his way, and the fact that he enjoys a liberal run of patronage at the hands of the people is sufficient evidence that he has many friends to his credit.

1915

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN:

18 March 1915

NEW PRODUCE FIRM:

Finney & Co. who for the past two years have run a produce house at Baxter, have removed from that town to Cookeville and have bought and occupied the building near the Farmer's Union Store. This company has other houses and is strong and reliable.

Mr. John Milton is the manager at the new establishment.

1916

Putnam County Herald, Thursday, Cookeville, TN:

13 July 1916:

DOUBLE WEDDING:

A party of several young people drove down from Algood Saturday night in automobiles and stopped at the Minor House, where Rev. R. J. Craig was called in and a beautiful double wedding took place. The contracting parties were Mr. Fred Dryer and Miss Galena Poteet; Mr. Fred King and Miss Susie Lemons, all of whom were from Algood.

The ceremony was performed in the presence of quite a number of friends.

NOTICE TO FARMERS:

All farmers who are intending to sow crimson clover this fall and wish to get inoculation please see me as soon as possible so I can order it for them from the Dept. of Agriculture. Blair Harrison, Co Agt.

DID YOU KNOW THAT:

Life is a constant struggle against death?

Dirty refrigerators may make sickness.

The U. S. Public Health Service issues free bulletins on rural sanitation.

The defective citizen of today is oft times the unhealthy child of yesterday.

Every man is the architect of his own health.

The full dinner pail – the open window – the clean well – make for health.

1917

Putnam County Herald, Thursday, Cookeville, TN:

2 February 1917

DEATH OF MRS. ADDIE DAVIS:

Mrs. Addie Davis, wife of Alvis Davis, died at the family home near Balch, Texas, Saturday afternoon and was buried at Spring Creek Sunday afternoon at 2 o'clock. Mrs. Davis is survived by her husband and six weeks old baby, also two brothers, and three sisters, one of whom lives in Tennessee. She was a Miss Nicholas and had only been married about fifteen months. She was once a resident of Cookeville.

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN:

Thursday, 22 February 1917

MASS MEETING:

Considerable discussion having arisen as to the advisability of adopting a commission form of government for Cookeville by having a new charter enacted by the present session of the legislature, and the board of mayor and aldermen having so suggested by motion duly adopted, a mass meeting of citizens of Cookeville is hereby called to meet in the courthouse next Monday, Feb. 26, 1917, at one o'clock, p.m., for the purpose of discussing the question. It is urged that every citizen interested in the welfare of our city be present and make his views known.

O. K. Holladay, Mayor.

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN:

Thursday, 1 March 1917

NOTICE: Whereas, We are unable to get the proposed commission charter for Cookeville printed in the paper, notice is hereby given that a copy of said proposed commission charter will be found at the office of the recorder, on the square, and another at the drug store run by Wyly Drug Co. on west side; and for the purpose of letting the citizenship of Cookeville understand and know fully what is contained in said proposed commission charter, a mass meeting is hereby called to be held in the public school building on Monday, March 5th at 7:30 p.m. which meeting all citizens are requested to attend, and at which time the proposed charter will be read and all citizens desiring to be heard in advocacy of either the present form or the proposed form of city government will be afforded an opportunity to be heard. If necessary and desirable, said mass meeting can adjourn to a night later in the week for a meeting at either the courthouse or public school building for further discussion of said charter. This is done that all the citizenship may have an opportunity to thoroughly understand the proposed commission form of government.

O. K. Holladay, Mayor.

The proposed new charter was drawn up and tendered the Herald, but we could not print it this week on account of its length. No blame attaches to anyone and there was no design to withhold publication.

E. L. Wirt, Editor Herald.

1919

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN:

1 May 1919

TRACTOR DEMONSTRATION:

The greatest demonstration of farm tractors ever held will be held on the T.P.I. school farm in Cookeville, Saturday, April 10th from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m., and everybody interested in purchasing a tractor is urged to be present, to gain some information of modern land preparation. Remember the date, April 10. It is free to everybody. The following tractors will be used: Fordson, John Deere, I.H.C. and Lauson.

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