

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

1910's

(Compiled by Audrey J. Lambert)

<http://www.ajlambert.com>

1910

(January 13, 1910) There's been a lot of talk after the Bank of Cookeville failed to open its door for business as usual one morning.

Wirt writes that the bank has recently made several large loans, followed by several large, unexpected withdrawals of funds, which dropped the cash level below a safe working balance.

Investigation, says Wirt, shows the bank is sound, but it has been reorganized with Jere Whitson as President and W.R. Carlen as treasurer and it's to reopen in a few days.

(January 27, 1910) The Bank of Cookeville is dead.

Jere Whitson has been appointed receiver and hopes to pay ten percent in next few days and eventually all owed to depositors', Wirt writes.

Meanwhile, Cookeville will have two new banks. The Bank of Putnam will open next week in the former Bank of Cookeville building with T.R. Preston of Chattanooga as president and J.R. Mitchell of Crossville as cashier with \$30,000 in capital.

Meanwhile J.T. Anderson and others will open the First National Bank of Cookeville March 1.

"Considering all things our prospects are much brighter than for some time and it is hoped that with some proper conduct and patience events will so shape themselves that the threatened crash and panic will disappear," say Wirt.

(February 17, 1910) Congressman Cordell Hull has proposed a federal building for Cookeville, and Col. C.H. Whitney writes a letter showing Cookeville's growth since it was incorporated seven years ago.

The total appraised property on the books in 1903: \$148,400. In 1909: \$736,449.

Manufacturing business has increased 235 percent, wholesale grocery business, 130 percent, wholesale hardware business, 127 percent, retail hardware, 83 percent, musical instruments and jewelry, 127 percent. Banking business is up 180 percent.

Since the new federal building would be for post office and court offices, Whitney notes that postal receipts in 1903 were \$1,962.80. Last year, they were \$6,752,81.

(March, 10, 1910) Baxter Seminary, a school to be run by the Methodist Church, has opened in Baxter.

(Nov. 10, 1910) Sidewalks have been laid from the Depot to the top of the hill on the north side of the street," Wirt notes.

"People living west of that point can slide and wade the rest of the way home as usual."

1911

(January 5, 1911) A meeting was held here this week by a group supporting the State Long Road from Bristol to Memphis. The state is currently planning such a road and the group passed a resolution recommending that the Walton Road be incorporated into the plan.

It's the most direct route between Nashville and Knoxville and the only one that does not require a bridge built over the Caney Fork. There's already a "splendid steel structure" there at the Trousdale Ferry, they noted. Also, the route was planned by engineers following the route of buffalo, "who are some of the best surveyors of olden times."

(February 16, 1911) The newspaper published a report from Putnam Middle Division Road Commissioners C.H. Rickman, J.W.H. Terry and J.N. Cox on road progress under recent the recent \$100,000 bond issue.

They say 20.5 miles of road in the county's middle section have been "macadamized," nine feet wide and six inches deep, at a cost of \$1,267 per mile. The total spent so far, \$22,550.

Paved to date: three miles of Cookeville-Nashville Road, 6.4 miles of Cookeville-Sparta Road, 4.5 miles of Algood-Dry Valley Road; and five miles of the Algood-Livingston Road.

Also, rocked and ready for paving: 4.5 more miles of Cookeville-Nashville Road, four miles of the Cookeville-Hilham Road, four miles of the Cookeville-Shipley Road, four miles of the the Cookeville-Dry Valley Road, three miles of the Cookeville-Ditty Road, and one mile of the Cookeville-Algood Road.

(May 16, 1911) The first brick was laid for Dixie University before a large crowd.

"This marks the beginning of a new era of prosperity and progression for Cookeville," writes Wirt.

"Construction has begun on the main building of Dixie University, the great institution of learning to be established in our beautiful and thriving little city. The occasion was made a gala day, business places closing and our citizens generally attending the ceremonies, which were under the direction of the Hon. Jere Whitson, and everything passed off pleasantly without a hitch.

"Promptly at 1 o'clock the Cookeville Band led the way to the campus where a concourse of about 1,500 people assembled."

(June 22, 1911) The Methodist Episcopal Church has laid the cornerstone on Baxter Seminary. Work is expected to be rapidly pushed to completion.

(August 3, 1911) Board of Education Secretary Gid H. Lowe has completed the annual census of school-age population in Cookeville. There are 625 school-age children in the corporate limits and no black children. All the community's blacks live outside of town, he notes.

Also, in the past year there were 46 births and 18 deaths. Most of the deaths were elderly or infants. The death rate this year is less than one per 100 and the birth rate was two and a half per 100.

(September 9, 1911) The Savoy Theater is opening. On Friday night its first presentation will be "The Runaway Horse."

The newspaper reports, "The Savoy is strictly a family theater where pa and ma and the children can go on any evening except Sunday and be amused and instructed by the ever popular photo plays.

"The Savoy is on the Association circuit, which lends to its members the best pictures, so Savoy patrons can rely on seeing the same pictures that are shown in Nashville and Memphis.

“The machine at the Savoy contains Thompson’s flickerless attachment, which projects absolutely perfect pictures and is fireproof.”

Admission is 10 cents for adults and five cents for children.

1912

(May 16, 1912) A note from E.L. Wirt and son: “The Publishers of the Herald are anxious to put in new machinery — a typesetting machine, fast press and power — in order that that the paper may be larger and better.

“Putnam County and Cookeville need and deserve a full-grown and vigorous paper through which to keep their resources and opportunities properly before the public.

“Owing to the complete loss of our plant to fire some time ago, we have not the funds necessary to install this equipment and so we make a plea to our friends for help.”

(June 13, 1912) The Modern Woodsmen of the World and The Dixie Athletic Association announce plans for a Fourth of July fest stretching from the Square to the Depot. “We have arranged to have an air ship float over the city at 9 a.m. so come early and see this wonderful feature”

“At intervals during the evening we have arranged to balloon ascensions and parachute drops from dizzying heights by one of the most daring balloonists’ in the world.”

Also baseball at the fairgrounds: the Slim Jims vs. the Fat Bills. ‘Slims’ must weigh no more than 150 pounds and be no less than six feet tall. ‘Fats’ must be no less than 200 pounds and at least three feet tall. Second game, Harriman vs. Cookeville.

Also fireworks, prize contests and free exhibitions.

(August 8, 1912) Nine members of Cookeville’s Boy Scout “company” left on a hike this week — to Chattanooga and back. They’ll be gone about 20 days. The nine: Commander Ralph Wirt, Allie and Howell E. Smith, Clay and Lee Franklin, Alvin and Willard Wirt, Clifford McDanile and Roscoe Proffit.

They carry a letter from Cookeville Mayor John B. Dowell and plan to bring one back from Chattanooga’s mayor.

1913

(January 22, 1913) Mule day continues to grow in Cookeville. More than were 1,000 mules were here on Square today. Cookeville is one of the best mule markets in the state, says Wirt.

(February 20, 1913) “Ten years ago, or to be exact, Feb. 11, 1903, the first issue of the Putnam County Herald was printed,” Wirt writes this week.

“The publishers have tried to keep the plant up to the demands of a constantly increasing business and equipped the modern equipment and the latest styles of type. The Herald has been published every week, except during a period of mental aberration when we moved to Celina.

“It has been sold at a price of 25 cents a year, a price which other publishers say a newspaper cannot be printed. But the Herald has prospered for ten years and is the only newspaper in the county sold at this price.

“Our plant to begin with cost about \$600, which was bought on credit. It consisted of a small job press, some job type and tools, while the paper was printed on what was called an army press, that cost \$50. It

would print one page the present size of the Herald and was run by hand by one man while another put ink on the forms. About 250 papers could be printed in an hour.

“With this outfit the publishers struggled for some time, working hard and long hours, but striving to print a clean newspaper and do high grade printing at a reasonable price, this policy having been laid down at the beginning. After a time a larger press was secured.”

(May 22, 1913) The Herald’s circulation figures: 3,226 copies are mailed out every week. This includes mailed 900 out of state to former residents.

(May 29, 1913) R.L. Harding has opened a photography studio here. He was associated for past two years with the W.S. Lively photographic business in McMinnville and has purchased the Baxter Studio here and moved his family to Cookeville. John Baxter is returning to his home in Delaware.

(June 1, 1913) The Arcade Building has opened on the west side of the Cookeville Square.

(June 19, 1913) A new state law says all children between eight and 14 must attend public school or a private academy for 80 consecutive days unless the child is physically or mentally incapacitated or lives more than two miles from school and there is no public transportation provided. It also requires cities to have truancy officers.

(July 17, 1913) The second building went up at Dixie College this week, a Bible School. It will to cost \$15,000.

Wirt says the structure is a three-story red brick building with buff stone siding. Principal W. B. Boyd turned the first spade to break ground. It will house about 30 students as well serve as a chapel and room for classes and lectures.

1914

(January 29, 1914) The Savoy Theater has closed and in its place, the Hippodrome is opening, showing “moving” pictures. The “Hip” will be run by J.W. Fowler.

(February 5, 1914) A line of iron hitching posts with chains has been placed in the vacant lot between the depot and the main business block by Harp & Pointer. It’s to accommodate those wanting to hitch their buggies and horses — and to prevent hitching to phone poles and fences near the depot.

(July 2, 1914) Cookeville’s Rutledge Smith has been named General Supt. of the Tennessee Central Railroad by the company’s receivers. He has been with the company about four years.

(August 20, 1914) The Panama Canal has just opened, war is breaking out in Europe, and in Cookeville, Dixie College has combined with Putnam High School to create one school for students here to take them through their junior year of college without having to go away. An agriculture and domestic sciences department has been added at the school.

(September 23, 1914) Wirt writes on the European war: “The great war in Europe rages with unabated fury along a battle line hundreds of miles long, but no decisive action has resulted.

“One wing of the German army is advancing on Paris while their other lines are held in check or driven back. Russian forces have been successful as a rule in the east against the Germans and Austrians. There has been no naval battle of importance. Turkey, Italy and Greece are about to become involved in the war. Japan has declared war on Germany, but will operate only in the area of Asia.”

1915

(April 1, 1915) Tennessee legislators have created a state technical school in Cookeville, Tennessee Polytechnical Institute. The city and county are to pitch in with \$75,000.

The bill creating TPI calls for "a first class institution for the technical education of white pupils between the age of 15 and 35."

(April 29, 1915) Editor and now state representative Elmer Wirt went to Nashville this week with his son, Raymond E. Wirt, spending three days there to see the sights.

"The Cookeville Ice Plant will be completed about the 15th of May, we understand, so it will not be long before we can use home 'grown' ice," Wirt writes this week.

(May 23, 1915) The town of Baxter has incorporated.

(July 1, 1915) Clark and Pointer of Algood have secured the agency for Overland cars for four counties and report the sell of three cars this week already, notes Wirt this week.

The City Garage is selling automobiles faster than they can get them so if anyone wants one they'd better get in line now, he adds.

Meanwhile, a new state taxing law goes into effect today for owners of autos and motorcycles. They now have to pay an annual state tax, \$2.50 for motorcycles, \$5 for two-seater autos and \$7.50 for four-seaters.

(July 15, 1915) A new state road law goes into effect. It requires the county court in each county to survey and classify all public roads in the county as first, second or third class roads. It also requires them to divide each county into 'sections' and appoint an overseer over all roads and bridges in each section.

The law requires all males in unincorporated sections of county between ages of 21 and 50, except those excused by the county medical board, to be subject to road duty. This is spelled out as working up to eight eight-hour days a year ditching and maintaining roads.

Also, it says each county court will levy a tax on all property owners outside incorporated areas, 15 cents per 100 worth of property for roadbuilding and upkeep.

(September 9, 1915) A letter from Noah E. Landrum to friends back home was published this week. A former resident of Baxter, he left there April 1, 1914 and moved about the country for a time.

He went back to St. Francis Ark. where he'd been born in 1884, but found all his old friends there dead. Next he says he drifted around the South, ending up in New Orleans, where he departed on a British transport ship for a 38 day voyage to Calcutta.

The ship was chased by German submarines but escaped. When he left Calcutta for Liverpool, England, his ship was found by another German submarine and sunk. Landrum spent 11 days in a lifeboat before British warship rescued them. He arrived in England in May.

Landrum writes that England "is a hundred years behind the times. I have not had one square meal since I got here." The daily fare: tea, butter and bread for breakfast, tea, butter, bread and a few stewed potatoes for dinner, tea butter and bread for tea around 5 p.m.

He writes that there are about 10,000 Americans in England for the war.

(September 16, 1915) The city has a new theater, the Strand. Attendance is growing daily. A cool and comfortable room and high class pictures are what the Strand pledges.

(October 28, 1915) An enthusiastic meeting was held in the courthouse this week in which Jere Whitson, Judge Sam Edwards, J.R. Douglas and Henry Dies were appointed by the crowd to oversee a 'Good Roads

Day' outing. Cookeville men were invited to come help improve the road from Cookeville to Double Springs.

They brought their tools and wagons and several hundred tons of crushed rock and gravel was provided by the county. A friendly competition ensued to outdo a similar team working that day from Double Springs towards Cookeville. The two teams met in the middle for a big barbecue.

(November 4, 1915) "The young people enjoyed a Halloween party at the home of Mr. Henry Draper Saturday night," reports a columnist in *Algood*.

"Most of all the accustomed Halloween lore was indulged in until a late hour. About 25 young ladies robed in sheets and pillowcases paraded the streets to the delight of children watching for them. To some of the older people it reminded them of the days of reconstruction, when the Ku Klux Klan was in full swing."

(December 2, 1915) Wirt writes, "G. W. Dillon, who lives on the farm one mile from Livingston where he was born, is one of the few living Tennesseans whose memory looks back well into pioneer days in the Upper Cumberland.

"He is 82 years old and still active and hearty. He says that in his childhood, puncheon floors were the rule in that section. He hauled the load of lumber to build the first house where Cookeville now stands, bringing it from the old McCormick water mill.

"Mr. Dillon also hauled goods to and from Nashville, a distance of more than 100 miles, before a railroad had been built into the capital city. His team consisted of three yoke of oxen, and the round trip required two weeks."

1917

(January 11, 1917) The second term of TPI, which formally opened on Sept. 14, 1916, has seen 'phenomenal' growth. Both dorms are full, with three males in each room of the men's dorms, and two females in each room of the women's dorms. Enrollment has exceeded all expectations, with 100 new students this term. There were 230 students the first term and very few of those failed to return. It costs \$8 a month to board in the dorms and meals are furnished.

(March 15, 1917) A referendum to switch from a mayor and board to a city commission form of government passed in Cookeville this week 211 to 147.

(March 29, 1917) "Mr. Lee," manager of the Strand, has made arrangements to show the Thomas H. Ince masterpiece, "Civilization," a look at the "war of wars." It's billed as "The picture that should end the war."

The film shows the "actual sinking of battleships by submarines, trench warfare and the wonderful development of airplanes." It cost \$1 million to make and had a cast of more than 40,000 people, 10,000 horses and 20 'aeroplanes.'

"The picture will be shown all day beginning at 12:30 p.m., thus giving people living in the lower part of the county an opportunity to come up on the noon train and return the same evening." Prices are 25 and 35 cents for matinees and 25, 35, and 50 cents for evening shows.

(April 5, 1917) President Woodrow Wilson has declared war on Germany. Congress has approved \$3 million to raise an army of 750,000. Recruiting is under way. Terms of service will be for the duration of the war. "Strenuous" efforts are under way to put the Navy on a war basis.

(April 12, 1917) **Mayor O.K. Holladay** is urging residents to raise food.

“For years food has been so plentiful in our section that little attention has been paid to its preservation. Conditions have now changed suddenly, and food riots are common in more populous sections of the United States, similar to those that have been going on for some time in Europe.

“Our people do not seem to realize the fact that the last two years have been lean ones. The Allies have been importing many food stuffs but we are near the end of the line in this country.”

He blames the abandonment of agriculture for other professions.

A mass meeting has also been called at the courthouse to discuss the federal and state recommendations on Americans raising food.

(April 26, 1917) A mass patriotic rally was held this week at the city school. The Cookeville Band and TPI Orchestra performed and students of TPI marched in in one body. On the stage were several “battle-scarred Confederate veterans.”

“All in all it was a great meeting and showed that the fire of patriotism still beats in the chests of our citizens,” editor Wirt writes.

(June 21, 1917) The newspaper prints the names of the hundreds of Putnam men who have registered for the draft.

Meanwhile, in now regularly recurring “Notes on the world war,” Wirt sums up week’s news. Gen. Pershing and staff are now in France. Soldiers are soon to follow.

He comments, “Congress has been in session three months and has done nothing except pass the draft law and authorize the spending of several billion dollars. They are piddling around like a bunch of school boys.”

German submarines were active last week, sinking more vessels.

(July 26, 1917) Putnam County’s first draft has been completed and the names drawn were printed in the paper this week. Afterwards, 126 men to are report to authorities. W.W. Coile of Cookeville was first on the Putnam list.

(August 2, 1917) The board of the Putnam County Fair Association decided this week that this year there will be no fair. The reason: “The increased interest in automobiles and the subsequent decrease in interest in harness and saddle horses” would mean that an entire new program of entertainment would have to be supplied and a new premium list drawn up and there’s not time to do it by the usual date.

Also, the high cost of living and the war have people preoccupied.

(August 9, 1917) Five residents were killed in a train-auto collision this week. Five from Monterey killed when their vehicle was hit by afternoon passenger train of the Tennessee Central Railroad.

State law now requires all autos to come to a complete stop 50 feet from all rail crossings before attempting to cross, Wirt notes. “No blame attaches to the train crew.”

(September 6, 1917) A public meeting was held this week to honor the first seven draftees going off to military training at Camp Gordon, near Atlanta.

They are Alfred Maddux of Baxter, C.E. Ramsey of Monterey, Clay Barr and Thurman Huddleston of Cookeville, J. H. Verble of Monterey, Wirt Vaden of Monterey, and Oakley Warren of the 15th district.

They’ll join other draftees from Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee. They’re traveling one at a time by train because the government fears swamping trains as draftees report.

(November 15, 1917) A chapter of the American Red Cross has organized here with Dr. Walter McClain as chairman.

“Putnam County has sent many of the flower of her manhood to answer the call of humanity. Those who stay behind have their part to do as well,” says Wirt.

The women volunteers will sew, knit and send canned goods to feed the starving in Europe. Mayor A.G. Maxwell has contributed a room in his brick building on Westside for use by the Red Cross.

(November 29, 1917) Alvin Wirt is dead.

He was the brother of Herald editor Elmer Wirt and helped with the production of the newspaper.

A telegram has been received by Elmer Wirt Monday stating that Alvin Wirt had been found dead in the woods near Big Falls, Minn. “No particulars have been received yet,” said Wirt.

Wirt left Cookeville Oct. 1 to see about the selling off of timber on his land in Northern Minnesota and apparently met with a fatal accident.

1918

(January 3, 1918) A Dec. 24 noon fire started in the Cookeville Bakery and destroyed that building as well as the Cookeville Produce and the J.W. Maddux Meat Market, along with an adjacent vacant building owned by H.J. Shanks. All the buildings were wood frame.

(January 10, 1918) In an item on page one this week, Collie Jared writes his mother from the lines in the war in France.

“Dear Mother, am getting along fine. Weigh 140 pounds. Had a good Thanksgiving dinner, turkey, cranberry sauce, celery, pie, cake, ect. But still it was not like the Thanksgiving dinner that you cook.

“I have not got any mail yet but expect to get some soon as it takes about two months to get any after you get over.

“I can’t write much about the war over here but I am a good safe distance back from the firing line — about as far as you are from Nashville.”

(April 4, 1918) The US Fuel Administration is urging homeowners to buy their coal now and in May for the year ahead. Coal supply are strained by the war. Mines usually have a lull in the spring but mine owners have been told by the government to keep mines going full speed year round for the duration of the war.

If homeowners buy their annual coal supply now, it will fill the lull and keep coal supply available later for the railroads, which need it for troop and supply transport, says the agency.

(August 29, 1918) Gasoline-less Sundays have been declared by the Federal Fuel Administrators. Only emergency workers, doctors and railroad equipment that uses gasoline should be burning gas on Sundays to conserve supply for US troops, says the government.

Meanwhile, TPI has been named one of the schools in Tennessee authorized for Student Army Training. Young men with at least an 8th grade education can enroll and the draft does not apply to them.

Those who do poorly are subject to draft. Those who do well avoid it. Many are expected to voluntarily go into service after training. Training at TPI will consist of basic military drill and lore.

(September 26, 1918) The Federal Food and Fuel Administrations have ordered that all stores and business houses open at 7 a.m. and close at 6 p.m. in order to regulate fuel consumption.

<http://www.ajlambert.com>