

## WITH THE WEATHER TURNING COLDER, LOCAL MUSEUMS OFFER PLENTY TO SEE INSIDE, AND ADMISSION IS FREE

Written by Megan Trotter/Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN

**COOKEVILLE** — Now that temperatures have plunged and winter is fully upon us, many people are looking for indoor activities to fill their free time. Historical museums like the Patton House Museum, Cookeville History Museum, Cookeville Depot and Putnam County Archives/Veterans Hall provide plenty of indoor exhibits to get visitors out of the cold, and best of all, admission is free.



(Visitors to the Cookeville Depot Museum climb aboard to check out the car where the coal was kept).

### **Patton House Museum**

The Patton House Museum, located at 1656 W. Broad St. in Cookeville, currently houses more than 2,000 dolls from the collection of the late Velma Thompson. The museum came to be in 2008, when Maurine Patton, a Putnam County teacher and avid historian, donated her home and local historical research to the county. At first, she wanted it to be the location of the Putnam County Archives; however when Glenn Jones, Putnam County archivist, informed her that it was not a good location for the archives, they decided it needed to become a museum.

Around the same time, Jones had been told about the doll collection of Velma Thompson. She had been trying to donate her collection to the Cookeville History Museum; however, because of the enormous size of her collection, the history museum had no space to hold them all. Jones made the connection between Patton and Thompson and the ladies agreed that the doll collection should be housed in the Patton home, which would be converted into a museum. Once the home was set up into a museum, Jones took the dolls and set them up in their new home himself.

“It was like taking her children away from her. She was upset,” Jones remembered. “She told me that it was the most horrible thing that had ever happened to her. It was pitiful. She got in bed and she was crying. But I told her, ‘Velma, just think, you won’t be here forever, but now your dolls will and everyone will remember you through these dolls and will be able to enjoy them.’”

Once he finally got them set up, Thompson was taken on a tour of the doll museum and was floored by how many dolls were set up there.

“She said, ‘Glenn, who else’s dolls are these here?’ I said, ‘Velma, they’re all yours.’ She couldn’t believe it,” Jones said.

There were thousands of dolls that had been kept in boxes for decades. In fact, Jones recalls that when he went to her home, he found that all the tables in her home were actually stacks of dolls in boxes, covered by tablecloths.

“There weren’t real tables anywhere. They were all covered boxes,” Jones said. “She probably hadn’t seen those dolls in years.”

Thompson’s collection contains thousands of dolls dating back to the 1800s, ranging from simple baby dolls to dolls dressed in the fashion of foreign countries to a collection of dolls made to look like the First Ladies of the United States. There is also a giant doll house with hand-made furniture and miniature clothing, rugs, tablecloths and other pieces made by Thompson.

The museum is open every Saturday from 1-4 p.m. and on other days by special request. For more information, call 931-252-2755.

### **Cookeville Depot Museum**

The Cookeville Depot, located on the corner of Broad St. and Cedar St. in Cookeville, was built and used as a real train depot in 1909. It ran as a passenger service until 1955, then as a freight service until the mid-60s until it closed.

“It fell into horrible disrepair,” Beth Thompson, Depot historical arts assistant, said. “It was on a list of many other area depots to be destroyed in the mid-70s, but a local group of concerned citizens got together and convinced a city councilman to get on their side. He convinced the city to then buy the depot from the railroad for \$1. The railroad was willing to sell it for \$1 because it was cheaper than destroying it and having the liability of having to take it down.”

Restoration took about 10 years, and the building was put on a National Historic Register in 1985. It’s been operating as a museum ever since. Visitors can see a working railroad model, walk through the rooms original to the first building and see pictures, signs and other memorabilia from the depot.

Their annual Christmas open house will be held from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Dec. 6, and will feature Santa, carolers, plenty of games and activities, and even a live reindeer.

The Cookeville Depot Museum is open from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. For more information, call 931-528-8570 or visit [www.CookevilleDepot.com](http://www.CookevilleDepot.com).

## **Cookeville History Museum**

The Cookeville History Museum, located at 40 E. Broad St. in Cookeville, is housed in a building built in the mid-1960s that has been home to a number of businesses, including Thompson's Color Magic and Respiratory Home Health Care. The museum was originally located in a small house on Lowe Ave. in Cookeville.

At its current location, the museum holds displays of artifacts ranging from Cookeville's earliest days — including Native American artifacts, tools from early settlers, and photos of important areas and scenes around town.

“We've got some neat things coming up for the holidays,” said Judy Duke, administrator of museums for the City of Cookeville. “We're having Santa and an open house on Dec. 13. We will be having an antique pedal cars exhibit here, and bicycles and tricycles that we will be sharing from the collection of a gentleman in Cookeville.”

The museum is open from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesdays-Saturdays. For more information, call 931-520-5455 or visit [www.cookeville-tn.org/ls](http://www.cookeville-tn.org/ls).

## **Putnam County Archives and Veterans Hall**

The Putnam County Archives and Veterans Hall is located underneath and behind the Putnam County Clerk's building at 121 S. Dixie Ave. in Cookeville. The archives holds records from Public Records Commission, some dating back from 1823. Many of the records are fascinating, such as an 1842 court book from when Putnam County was first established. After three years, Jackson and Overton Counties filed a lawsuit against Putnam County because this new county had taken significant property from those two counties. Putnam County dissolved for a time.

“The Tennessee state legislature said to take all the state records from those three years that they ran and take them to Gainesboro and put them in the courthouse, and they did,” Jones said. “So we have an 1842 book that was written in White Plains in Putnam County. Somebody took it from there to Gainesboro, probably on a horse, in 1845.

And they started doing Jackson County cases in it. Then when they reestablished Putnam County in 1854, somebody got that book and brought it back up here and started writing in it again.”

The veterans hall houses hundreds of photos of local veterans, as well as the old uniforms and other memorabilia from soldiers and their families. The displays include veterans with a connection to Putnam County; however, the display on the Civil War includes soldiers from anyone in the Upper Cumberland.

“Because Putnam County was established the second time in 1854, so most people who fought in the Civil War from this spot right here were in Jackson County,” Jones said.

Each veteran who has a photo in the veterans hall also has a corresponding folder in the archives where that soldier or his or her family can leave behind any information about who that person was and what they did.

“Everything in here has a story,” Jones said.

The Putnam County Archives/ Veterans Hall is open from 1-4 p.m. Wednesday-Friday. For more information, call 520-0042.

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\*Read more about Putnam Co., TN & surrounding areas at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>