

BAXTER CELEBRATES HISTORIC DEPOT GROUNDBREAKING

by [Megan Trotter](#)

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Jeanie Lee, chair of the rebuilding committee for the Baxter depot, Friends of the Baxter Depot, and the Beautification Committee, speaks at the groundbreaking of the Baxter depot. Herald-Citizen Photo/Ty Kernea

BAXTER — A small crowd gathered yesterday on the strip of land across the street from



Baxter City Hall where a groundbreaking was held for the rebuilding of the Baxter depot. Those gathered included a small portion of the countless people who had a hand in making the reconstruction a reality — from those who first presented the idea back in 2005, to those who signed the final paperwork.

“This is not an ordinary day,” Sue Neal, community president of Bank of Putnam County, said. “This is so special for so many of us. ... In my opinion, this is the most historical thing that’s happened in Baxter since 1923 when Dr. Harry Upperman came to town.” Brenley & Sons Construction will begin construction on the site, with the completion date listed as Jan. 19, 2013. The total cost will be \$383,550, and the city is committed to funding 20 percent of the project.

Mayor Jeff Wilhite said that the rebuilding of the depot reminded him of the Biblical story of Nehemiah.

“Nehemiah got word from his people that Jerusalem’s walls were down,” Wilhite explained. “They were burned up, they were down, and they needed rebuilding.

“In one night (Baxter) lost four buildings right here to fire. Just down the tracks a little ways in a separate fire, we lost another building in one night to a fire. There used to be a depot that stood right here. It was the center, it was the headquarters of our commerce. ... In the Bible, Nehemiah got permission from the king to go and rebuild the walls. ... When Nehemiah went to the people, though, he didn’t say, ‘Come and watch me build this wall,’ he said, ‘Come, and let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.’ This is very similar.”

Despite yesterday’s heat, the crowd that gathered to celebrate the groundbreaking of the

depot was in good spirits and talked excitedly about the long-awaited project.

“That’s what Baxter is celebrating today, a day of coming back, a day of bringing back the spirit that birthed us,” said Jeanie Lee, chair of the rebuilding committee, Friends of the Depot, and the Beautification Committee. “It’s an awesome time.”

FOR BAXTER DEPOT



Friends of the Baxter Welcome Center/Depot gather around an antique oak counter/cabinet adorned with fluted mouldings and corbels. The piece was donated by B. J. Dennis for the

Baxter Welcome Center/Depot and originally came from Baxter Bank and Trust in 1929. Pictured, from left, in front, are Jeanie Lee, Connie Gentry, Faye Shanks, June Lewis, Karen Knowles, Glen Jones, Sue Neal, Eddie Watts; and in back, Bill Shanks and Ken Hall.

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BAXTER DEPOT LOOKING FOR PIECES OF LOCAL HISTORY

by Megan Trotter

BAXTER — As the final touches are coming together for the construction of the new Baxter Depot/Welcome Center, the Baxter Historical Committee for the Depot is preparing to decorate the inside with photos and artifacts from the area’s past.

“We’re really proud of the new depot and we feel there’s a lot of good history in the Baxter area that could be brought in here and saved for generations to come,” Glenn Jones, committee member, said.

So far there are photos of the Baxter railroad, old Baxter businesses and Upperman High School, as well as an ice box from the old Baxter Hotel. There is even an old counter from the Baxter Bank and Trust that was later used in the H & N Campbell Grocery store next to the grill. It was later saved by B.J. Dennis, and Cleo Nash Dennis, co-owners of the store.

“(B.J. Dennis) thought, ‘What an awesome piece of history. This needs to be saved.’ He had it all cleaned off and he put new doors on the back of it. He wanted it to be shown, so it was put in the Putnam County Library for years,” Jones said.

Now it sits in the depot, awaiting installation with the other artifacts from Baxter’s past. The building will be split into three sections: a history museum, a welcome center, and a conference room.



(Pictured: Members of the Baxter Historical Committee for the Depot stand at the donated counter from the old Baxter Bank and Trust. From left, are June Lewis, Faye Shanks and Glenn Jones. Ty Kernea | Herald-Citizen)

Committee member Faye Shanks, who grew up in the Boma area, is donating a

number of old photos to the history museum. Her father worked on the Baxter railroad.

“He had a blacksmith shop and when his tools would get dull, they’d come across the field and use the shop,” she said. “It was just two miles from here.”

Committee member June Lewis, a Baxter native, is also donating photos for the museum. One is a large print of her parents’ store, the Cumberland Cafe, which was open for 40 years.

“Their slogan was ‘A hamburger without cheese is like a kiss without a squeeze,’” Lewis said with a smile.

The historical committee is looking for anyone with old photos or artifacts from the Baxter area that they would be willing to donate to the history museum in the depot. They are also interested in any old store showcases from area stores to display the artifacts and photos.

“Our theme is not just the railroad, it’s the history of Baxter Seminary, Upperman High School, and businesses all around the community,” Jones said.

Monetary donations are also needed.

The committee is having their large photos professionally framed by Universal Art and Frame for \$50 each. The committee is also offering \$100 inscribed granite bricks to be placed in a patio near the depot, as well as pewter ornaments of the Baxter Depot and Baxter Seminary for \$10 each. All the proceeds will go to the Friends of the Depot for the upkeep of the new building.

For more information about donating historical artifacts from Baxter, call Jones at 931-704-0085, Lewis at 858-4623 or Shanks at 858-2613.

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



THE NEW BAXTER DEPOT

Baxter Mayor Jeff Wilhite inspects the grounds around the new depot/welcome center, which is nearly complete. Photo by Ty Kernea.

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