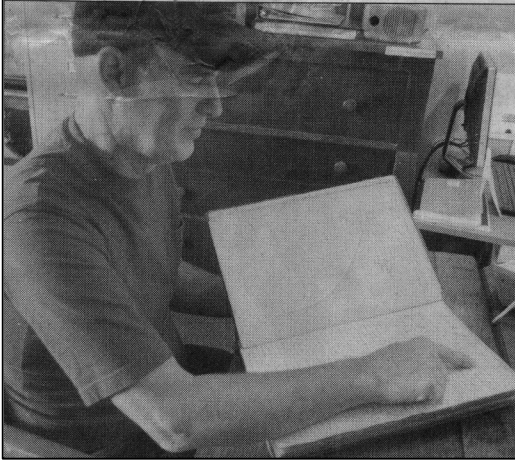


PUTNAM ARCHIVE GOING ONLINE

by Megan Trotter

<http://www.ajlambert.com>

PUTNAM COUNTY — The Putnam County Archives will soon have a large number of its historical records online for free public access at www.FamilySearch.org, thanks to volunteers from the non-profit organization who are donating their time to digitize the records. Several volunteers from the Tennessee office of FamilySearch.org have been through the archives, which is filled with filing cabinets of historical



documents, old photos and items from the past, as well as a large veteran's section with uniforms and photos of local men and women who served our country.

(Pictured: Glenn Jones, Putnam County archivist, looks through the first circuit court book in Putnam county. Many old loose records from the archives will be soon available for free online).

“As I traveled around the state, I realized this is a great attraction for people, and I wish more people knew about it,” said FamilySearch.org volunteer Janet Frey. “I’ve never seen anything like this.”

Frey has worked throughout Tennessee to preserve these original records before they are damaged, lost or thrown out. And these papers contain much more than dry historical facts. There are also fascinating stories that shine a light on specific periods of the community's history.

“In Paris, Tenn., I saw a case where it was of the wrongful death of a Negro, but throughout the case, it kept saying, ‘it did this,’ ‘it did that,’ ‘it was sickly,’ ‘it would walk through the weather and didn’t have shoes or coats,’ ‘it would go get water,’” Frey said. “When they talked about the person, they always called her ‘it,’ but when they talked about her value, they would say ‘the Negro woman.’ And the family really tortured this woman. She always had scratches and infections on her face because the teenage children ... they tortured her. In the end, she ended up dying. Then on the very last paragraph it said ‘This Negro woman was 10 years old.’”

Many of the slaves, Frey noticed, do not have names in the records she has looked through. In fact, there are many cases where they are recorded amongst a list of property, as if they were nothing more than kitchen equipment.

“You’d see when they’d name off (their possessions), they’d say, ‘I have three skillets, two spoons, one black — well, not black, they wouldn’t use that word — 8-year-old kitchen boy.’”

Records also reveal stories without endings.

“I saw a case where every year a couple had a child and it died,” Frey said. “They named it a certain name, and then the next year they’d use the same name. The next year they had another child and used the same name. Every year it would be that way. Then after a while, you wouldn’t see them on the record. You wonder, did they have a child who lived so they could use that name? Or did they just get too old to where they couldn’t have children any more?”

The records also indicate the level of education in each area over various years. Some have bad spelling, while some didn’t seem to be able to write hardly at all.

“On the back of some marriage certificates, the person would sign an X or whatever, but then they’d write some of the letters they knew of the alphabet, even though they weren’t pertaining to their name. They kind of had an ownership of, ‘Well, I know these letters here.’ ... You find so many interesting things (in these

records),” Frey said.

The records Frey is scanning now should be available on the FamilySearch.org website within two months. She had help from Charlie and Dixie Murry, missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who spent five months sorting through records that were in poor condition.

“These records were the worst I’d ever seen,” Glenn Jones, Putnam County archivist, said. “They were all wadded up. They were not flat, folded up. Rubber bands had been around them and dry rotted. They had to scrape the dry rubber bands off and then flatten (the papers). It was the biggest mess you’ve ever seen in your life.

“We had to put four tables out ... and every time they got one roll scraped off and cleaned, they had to lay it all out like a deck of cards and figure out which ones went where. ... If you stacked all the records they worked with on top of each other, the stack would be 85 feet high.”

The Putnam County Archives is located at 121 South Dixie Ave., around the back of the County Court Clerk’s building. It is open 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday - Friday. For more information, call 931-520-0042.

STATE BEGINS SCANNING COUNTY'S DOCUMENTS

by Laura Militana



(Putnam County Archivist Glenn Jones looks over some of the Patton Papers the archives has. The state will be starting the process of digitizing the files to go on the Internet for genealogists to research. Photo by Ty Kernea | Herald-Citizen)

COOKEVILLE — The process of digitizing historic documents at the Putnam County Archives is slowly getting underway, according to Glenn Jones, county archivist.

During a recent public records commission meeting, Jones stated that the state is interested in digitizing the

Patton Papers to make them accessible to anyone anywhere.

“The amount of records she collected is amazing,” Jones said. “Maurine Patton worked on these for years and she wanted them preserved.”



(Secretary of State Tre Hargett, left, was on hand for a recent awarding of a grant to the Putnam County Archives. Also pictured are state Rep. Ryan Williams, Putnam County Archivist Glenn Jones and Putnam County Executive Kim Blaylock. Amy Davis | Herald-Citizen).

Those records — totaling thousands of pages — are documentation of numerous families from all over the region in a chart organization.

Currently, the files are crammed in drawers and are too many pages to count.

“It’s amazing to look at these, there are so many,” Jones said.

When the digitization process is complete, the files will be available in a format anyone can view

anywhere, thanks to the World Wide Web. They will be put online at www.familysearch.org, a free service provided by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Volunteers at the archives are helping organize the files to send to Nashville to be scanned. Once the originals are scanned, they're sent back to the archive from which they came.

"Jackson County was the first county in Tennessee to have their archives digitized, so now we're next," Jones said. "The original copies will always be at the archives, but digitizing them will be also be an official legal copy."

Jones also told commission members of a \$2,345 grant they received from the Secretary of State's office. It is to help improve the storage conditions of and access to local government records.

"I am proud to award this grant to the Putnam County Archives," Secretary of State Tre Hargett said. "Archives are important because they store and preserve historical records for our county and municipal governments. It is my hope that this grant will help the archives with its archival development."

Hargett was on hand recently to visit the Archives and to personally award the check.

In 1998, the Secretary of State initiated a program to encourage development of local archives. Beginning in fiscal year 1999, \$50,000 per year has been made available for about 10 to 15 program improvement grants to local government archives.

Last year, the archives received a \$4,600 grant to pay for bookcases.

"This new grant will allow us to build more bookcases," Jones said. "We want to make the books accessible to the public while protecting the documents."

State Rep. Ryan Williams was also on hand for the grant awarding.

"Protecting and maintaining our historical documents is extremely important," he said. "I commend the Putnam County Archives for applying for this grant and I know the funds will be put to good use to help take care of our state's records."

State Senator Charlotte Burks echoed Williams' statements.

"I know the funds will be put to good use to preserve Putnam County's rich history," she said.

The grants are awarded for purchase of archival supplies, equipment or furnishings to directly help salvage, restore and preserve endangered permanent records of the county/municipality and for the purchase of supplies and equipment that directly help to achieve and maintain inventory control of permanent records so that they may be available for public inspection.

The Public Records Commission's long term goal was also approved. This involves raising funds for a new building, with the proposed location being seven acres at what would be the fifth interchange off of I-40.

"It would be a tourist destination," he said. "It would bring money in."

The commission is looking at applying for a Tennessee Tourism Enhancement grant of \$1 million, of which the county would have to match 20 percent of. First, they would have to acquire the property from the city, as it is part of the Highlands Business Park.

No discussion between the city and county has been held on the proposal. This proposal totals seven acres, including the Stewart Cemetery.

"It would be a monument," Jones said.

The funds are being raised through brick sales. For more information about that, call Jones at 520-0042 or 931-704-0085.

Jones also updated the commission on a new project he's embarking on — commemorating historic schools with signs, much like the “forgotten communities” signs.

“I'd say there are at least 150 historic schools that have significant historical value,” Jones said. “They may not be there anymore, but that's still history.”

The signs would have the name of the school and the years it was in use.

Jones hopes this project will encourage people who have photos and other historic documents pertaining to the schools will send them to the archives for documentation.

“We don't have any of those records,” he said. “We can then preserve that history.”
Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN: 9 May 2013

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