

TEEN FINDS LINKS TO PIONEER PAST

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By MEGAN TROTTER

Many children grow up hearing tales of their ancestry; however, most don't give it much thought until they are well into adulthood. There is too much going on in the now to



wonder about the past.

However, at least one young man in Putnam County is breaking that stereotype wide open. Thirteen-year-old Jared Herren has recently been inducted into the First Families program, requiring at least one ancestor linked back to the very first forming of Putnam County in 1842.

(Pictured: Thirteen-year-old

William Jared Herren looks through some of the genealogy files at the Putnam County Library. Photo by Ty Kernea | Herald-Citizen).

“Putnam County was first formed in 1842,” said Joann White with the Cookeville History Museum, “but Overton County thought we took too much of their land and we had to give some back, until Cooke came in and was able to re-do it in 1854.”

Those who arrived in Putnam County in 1854 are considered “settlers,” while the ones who arrived in 1842 are considered “pioneers.” Since 2013, individuals have been collecting information on their pioneer ancestors for the chance to be included in the First Families project. It is a project coordinated by the Friends of the Cookeville History Museum, Old Walton Road chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution, Upper Cumberland Genealogical Association, Putnam County Archives and Putnam County Library.

Herren decided to dig in and see what he could find in his own family tree. The genealogy bug bit him early. He had been just nine years old when his mother, Jill, decided to use ancestor research as a summer project.

“I thought it would just be fun. He has an amazing ability to remember dates and names,” Jill said.

“I can't remember my own phone number, but he can remember everybody's,” added his cousin, Claude Ann Burton, with a laugh.

So several years later when Burton — who was awarded the first certificate for completing her First Families genealogy — told him about the pioneer ancestry program, he was immediately interested. He spent countless hours pouring over census records, deeds, birth and death records, marriage licenses and more. He was a frequent visitor to



state and local archives and the Putnam County Library, as well as online genealogy sites.

“You have to do a lot of digging,” Burton said. “It’s easy to say, ‘Well, grandma and grandpa said this,’ or ‘This is what’s been passed down by the family,’ but the program won’t accept that. You had to have proof on every ancestor. This was not easy.”

Herren eventually found not just one, but three of his ancestors were Putnam County pioneers: Robert Herren, Jess Thomas and Samuel Raulston Jared. He had to go back six or seven generations for each ancestor to finally find the right connections. And just in time, too. The First Families program officially closed with his ancestor Robert Herren being entry number 147 in the log.

But even though the program is over, Herren’s passion for genealogy is still burning bright. He wants to continue to investigate not only his history, but the history of others as well. He sees a profession as a genealogist, archivist or historian in his future.

“Putnam County Archivist Glenn Jones teases him and says, ‘This young man is after my job!’” Jill said with a laugh.

*Read more about the people and places of Putnam Co., TN & surrounding areas at:

<http://www.ajlambert.com>