

Tennessee Counties Stories by G. W. Brown
Baxter Beacon Western Putnam History Edition
July 1996

Bloomington

The place known as Bloomington Springs began as a tourist resort. In 1874 Joseph B. Killebrew Tennessee Agricultural and Educational Leader, wrote that Bloomington was “the only village in the county worthy of mention.” The secret of the area was the healing powers of the mineral waters. Realizing the draw, W. M. Draper built a 200 guest hotel with a large ballroom and advertised for visitors from states around. It was the original county seat choice.

In its heyday, The Tennessee Woman’s Press and Author’s Guild located there. Local celebrities Mrs. Ruthledge Smith was President and Clara Cox was secretary. Another landmark was the Junior Military Academy operated by the late Major Roy DeBerry. Today, it is site of Chance Girls Facility.

Through for all its greatness, being off the beaten path of the railroad was what may have kept the little community from achieving the prosperity Cookeville knows today.

Boma



Boma came into existence as a flagstop for the railroad. Its name was in honor of the daughter of the railroad agent for the area. In 1890 Boma was site of the area’s phosphate mine. This 1912 photograph shows the Union Station and Store in Boma just west of Baxter.

Buffalo Valley

In the early days, Buffalo Valley was the shipping point for surrounding communities. Flocks of turkeys were driven from Granville for shipment North by rail. Tobacco from all over was sold by the ton at the tobacco warehouse. Livestock was driven in with some sales beating the Nashville stockyards in trade. Riverboats brought in loads of salt, grain and other products for trade.

In those days going to town to buy things was a visit to Buffalo Valley. There was a bank, four stores of general merchandise (suits, record players, victrolas, etc.), a drug store, restaurant, car dealership, two saw mills and two grist mills.

Three times a year there was Mule Day, an occasion when mules and horses were brought to town for sale and swap.

Burgess Falls



Burgess Falls is one of the most spectacular sites in Putnam County. It is a 110 ft. drop into the gorge below Falling Water River. It has been a favorite attraction since pioneer days where children swam in the pool, as well as fished at its' base for bass, catfish, suckers and sunfish! In the 40's a dam was built above the falls to generate electricity for TVA. Today there is a State Park at the top of the falls with hiking trails available for public use.

Two miles north of the falls are window cliffs. It is a unique genealogical formation with large aperture formed due to weathering. For the hearty hiker it is a must visit.

Double Springs

After the war 1812, Richard Fielding Cooke settled in the Big Woods. Though he is said to be the namesake of Cookeville, the area was near what is now Double Springs. Double Springs was formed at connection of Walton Road and Spart/Gainesboro route. In that time riverboats came to Gainesboro. In its day Double Springs served as a stopping point for the railroad. The Judd and Brown Hotels were located there for travelers.

Mine Lick

The town know as Mine Lick started around a general store located as a stop for the Railroad. As it grew its name became Ai then Baxter in honor of Jere Baxter, an influential leader with the railroad. In the 30'2 it was a rural community of around 600 population. As its number grew so did the city. Cham Vestel built the Hotel Baxer. In the forties that was Baxter Seminary that became Upperman. Restaurants, roller rink and movie theater followed.

Today Baxter is a nice little town. There are three restaurants the Bee-Hive, First Run Barbecue and Wagonwheel. Around town at each corner churches of all denominations are found. There is an elementary and a high school though rumor has it that is may soon close. There are two factories, two grocers, druggist, two funeral homes, two banks, laundry, auto parts, barber, movie rental, game room, senior center and a flea marker on the edge of town. Ai, you have come a long way since Mine Lick.

Silver Point

Silver Point received its name when the east and west runs of railroad tracks met at a common place, where a silver spike was used to join the two runs. Today, the Rose Garden and Old Homeplace Antiques where the old Boma Train Station/Post Office has been moved to are the main point of interest. Before the railroad, the place was known as Head of Valley (the trail beginning down into the prosperous Buffalo Valley of the time). In the old days there were two famous spots in Silver Point. The Dollar Cut Inn was operated by Howard Smith. Paul Swallows operated Swallows Salon and Café. It was said that he sometimes had ice and sometimes beer, but seldom did he have both at the same time.

ajlambert.com