

FREE UNION SCHOOL

Taught children from 1875-1953

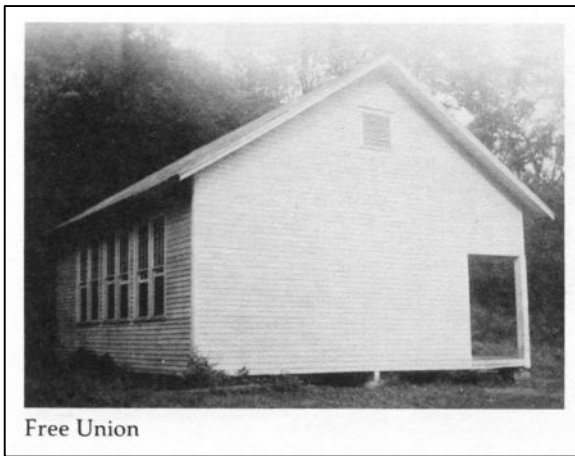
Putnam Co., TN

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN

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PUTNAM COUNTY – In their quest to document the history of Putnam County, the Putnam County Archives has been collecting information from local residents about the Free Union School, located just down Martin’s Creek and at the foot of the hill from Bloomington Springs at the intersection of Carrington Road and Martin’s Creek Road.

William Rodgers owned most of the land in the Saint Luke area, including the school property. The school opened in 1875 and closed in September 1953. The school had all eight grades in one room.



“The bigger boys would carry water from a spring farther up the creek,” Glenn Jones, Putnam County archivist, said. “According to Billy Lewis, a former student at Free Union, at recess the kids would play in the woods across the road. James McHenry, Billy Lewis, and Morgan McHenry told about hearing dogs bark in the woods; if it sounded like they had treed something, the teacher would let the boys go outside to see what it was.”

Because of constant flooding, the building was moved from its original location across the creek to a higher location near the road. Jr. Palk moved the building in the 1947-48 school year, using his mules.

Elizabeth Cumby Brown was the teacher that year. While the building was being moved, she held classes outside under a tree. Other teachers included Hixie Brown, Vinette Ward, Pansy Thompson, Mazelle Wood, Jewel Allison, and Grover Brewington. Mable Stout was the last teacher the year the school closed.

The building no longer stands. On September 26, 2013, all these former students gathered in the very spot where the Free Union School once stood and reminisced about the years they spent going to school and living in the Saint Luke community.

“It was very exciting to see the former students and residents come together to dedicate the newly erected Saint Luke and Free Union School signs,” Jones said. “A stranger to this community, driving along this beautiful country road, would never dream that there once was a vibrant community located here; there is no evidence left of the old community of Saint Luke and Free Union School. This is why it is important to place

these new signs, so the younger generations who live here can know about the people who once inhabited these areas.”

The signs for Free Union School were donated by James McHenry, Billy Lewis and Morgan McHenry. Anyone with more information on a Free Union School or another historical Putnam County school, or anyone who wants to help purchase a sign for other school can contact the Archives at (931) 520-0042 or come by 121 B. South Dixie.

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



Ty Kernea | Herald-Citizen

Celebrating the installation of the Free Union sign are, from left, Sue Neal, Billy Lewis, Jimmy Rodgers, Dorothy Long, Bruce Lewis (back), Shirley Long, Winnie Rodgers Jackson, Clayton Long (back), Willene Flatt Goolsby, James West, Joyce Waller West, Morgan McHenry, Marston Rodgers, James E. Maddox (seated), James McHenry and Brownie Vantrease.