

Putnam County Locality Guide (21 September 2023)

Geographic Area and County History



Putnam County was named for Israel Putnam, who was a hero in the French and Indian War and a general in the American Revolutionary War. The county is located in the north-central area of the state. ([FamilySearch Wiki](#))

The Tennessee General Assembly first created Putnam County in 1842 from Jackson, Overton, Fentress, and White Counties, but an 1844 injunction charged that it violated state constitutional requirements. In 1854 the general assembly reestablished the county, although it was harried by boundary disputes for decades. The new county seat, Cookeville, was named after Richard F. Cooke, whose efforts were critical to the county's second attempt at creation. Putnam County's name honors Revolutionary War general Israel Putnam.

Putnam County is located in the Upper Cumberland region. It spreads across three major geographic divisions of Tennessee: the Cumberland Plateau, the Highland Rim, and the Central Basin. Most of the county falls in the Highland Rim. A principal early nineteenth-century east-west migration route, the Walton Road, passes through the length of Putnam County. Many families stopped at this point about midway between Knoxville and Nashville on their journey along the Walton Road. There they established small subsistence farms, growing corn and other crops in the generally poor soil. By 1860 the population had risen to 8,591, including 718 blacks and 33 Native Americans. Settlement halted during the Civil War, when Putnam County civilians were harassed by both Confederate and Unionist guerrilla attacks that destroyed farmland and homes.

Between 1865 and 1910 the county population tripled. Part of the growth was due to the railroads that reached Putnam in the 1890s. The Nashville and Knoxville reached Cookeville from the west in 1890, and the Tennessee Central connected the Southern Railroad at Harriman to the new town of Monterey in Putnam County, founded when the tracks reached it in 1893. Other new villages were created in the wake of the railroad, including Buffalo Valley, Silver Point, Boma, Baxter, Algood, and Brotherton. Eventually the Tennessee Central ran all the way to Knoxville, and in 1902 its proprietor, Jere Baxter, bought the Nashville and Knoxville. The National Register-listed Tennessee Central depot in Cookeville contains an excellent local museum on the railroad days in Putnam County. Three years later Baxter moved the TC engine service facilities and crew change stop from Cookeville to Monterey, which became an important railroad-promoted resort area around the turn of the century. Industrialist John Wilder maintained a home and office there in the early 1900s.

Railroads brought prosperity to Putnam County farmers who finally gained access to urban markets. Railroads also served industry like the Cumberland Mountain Coal

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Company, the executives of which had organized Monterey, lumbering in the county's rich forests, and manufacturing. Education also grew during Putnam County's railroad years. The University of Dixie, known as Dixie College, was chartered by the general assembly in 1909 and opened in 1912. Organized through the efforts of the Church of Christ, this school merged with the new Tennessee Polytechnic Institute (TPI), which was created in 1915. TPI included three divisions: a two-year college, a four-year technical high school, and Putnam County's Central High School.

As the twentieth century progressed, Putnam County's agriculture suffered the setbacks being felt around the country in the 1920s. More farmers turned to poultry, egg, and dairy production as corn, tobacco, and hogs declined with decreasing profits. However, county leaders were optimistic about the prosperity that industrialization and commerce might bring. By 1928 Cookeville was calling itself the "Hub City-The Hub of the Upper Cumberland."

Roads helped deliver some of the growth that Putnam Countians awaited. Although the Memphis-to-Bristol Highway bypassed Cookeville to pass through Sparta to the south, U.S. Highway 70 North, the first modern highway in the Upper Cumberland, was completed through Putnam County in 1930. The county's transportation network also benefited from New Deal programs. The Cookeville airport was built in 1934 with matching Civil Works Administration and city funds.

With only modest industrialization, the county economy suffered in the postwar period because of persistent unemployment and low wages, causing many workers to leave Putnam during World War II through the 1950s. The next decade, though, saw expansion and increasing prosperity thanks to the construction of Interstate 40, rapid industrialization, the growth of Tennessee Technological University, and federal aid. Tennessee Polytechnic Institute changed its name to Tennessee Technological University in 1965 during the massive growth of the state higher education system. Today it is the county's largest nonmanufacturing employer and boasts an enrollment over 8,400. Tennessee Tech administers the Joe L. Evins Appalachian Center for Crafts, located near Center Hill Lake, which supports the modern practice of traditional crafts. The completion of I-40 through the county in the mid-1960s attracted manufacturing jobs as well. Today Putnam County has a 2000 population of 62,315 and is a fast-growing center for the Upper Cumberland region. ([Tennessee Encyclopedia](#))

[Cookeville-Putnam County Chamber of Commerce](#)

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Record Loss – Putnam County (Family Search)

1860s Courthouse records were damaged in the [American Civil War, 1861-1865](#).
1898 Fire damaged courthouse records.

- Lost marriage records: 1842 to 1878
- Lost probate records: 1842 to 1875

FamilySearch Putnam County [Catalog](#)

TnGenWeb Project – [Putnam County](#)

Contact – [Charles Reeves Jr.](#)

[Putnam County Historian](#) - Dale Welch

Email: [Send Email](#)

Record Location Table

Record Type	Location	Record Notes
Birth	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1908
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	Keeps for 100 years then they are sent to TSLA
Marriages	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1879
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	Keeps for 50 years then they are sent to TSLA
Divorce	Chancery Court Clerk	
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	TSLA
Deaths	County Clerk Office	County Registrations began 1908
	Tennessee Vital Records Office	Keeps for 50 years then they are sent to TSLA
	TSLA	1908-1912
		1914-1933
Land Deeds		County Registrations began 1854
	County Register	County Register of Deeds
List of Microfilmed Putnam County Records	TSLA-PDF	Download PDF

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Pension Applications	Tennessee State Archives & Library	County Index to Tennessee Confederate Pension Applications
Probate Records	Chancery Court	County Registrations began 1876
	TnGenWeb	
Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters	Ancestry.com (\$)	Tennessee Enumeration of Male Voters
World War I Veterans	Tennessee State Archives & Library	Research Collection

County Repositories

[Putnam County Archives](#)

Archivist: Glenn Jones

1656 W. Broad St., Cookeville, TN 38501

Open 1:00pm to 4:00pm Wednesday – Friday (subject to change, call first)

931-704-0085

[Putnam County Library- Cookeville Branch](#)

[Putnam County Library- Cookeville Branch – Tennessee Room](#)

[Tennessee Tech University - Volpe Library and Archives & Special Collections Library](#)

[Archives and Special Collections](#)

[Putnam & White County, TN Genealogy \(FB\)](#)

[Putnam Co. TN Genealogy Chat \(FB\)](#)

[Upper Cumberland Genealogical Association, Inc](#)

[Middle Tennessee Genealogical Society](#)

Current Area Information

[Cookeville-Putnam County Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Putnam County Government](#)

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Resources

General

[Tennessee County Database \(TNGS\) – Putnam County](#)
[Putnam County Wiki \(Family Search\)](#)
[Genealogy Trails Putnam County](#)
[Linkpendium – Putnam County](#)
[Tennessee State Library & Archives – Putnam County Facts Sheet](#)
[TLSA Name Index – Putnam County \(Acts of Tennessee 1796-1850\)](#)
[TNGenWeb – Putnam County](#)
[USGenWeb Archives – Putnam County Tennessee](#)
[Tennessee Law, The Early Days](#)

Newspapers

Tennessee State Archives & Library

[Check Online Catalog for Cookeville Newspaper Details & Dates Held.](#) We do not necessarily hold all published issues of the newspapers.

Putnam County Newspapers

Citizen. Published N 27? 1895 - 1899? w.
Citizen. Published Je 23 1954 - Je 14 1960. w.
Cookeville Citizen. Published Je 21 1960 - Ja 7 1969. w.
Cookeville Courier. Published My ? 1890 - ? w.
Cookeville Free Press. Published Mr 7 1963 - Jl 5 1963. w.
Cookeville Herald - Citizen. Published Ja 14 1969 - sw.d.
Cookeville News. Published 1863? - ? w.
Cookeville Press. Published ? 1887 - 1917? w.
Cookeville Times. Published Jl 26? 1856 - ? w.
Dispatch. Published A 21 1965 - Jl 19 1987. w.tw.d.
Middle Tennessean. Published N 19? 1873 - ? w.
Putnam County Herald. Published F 11 1903 - O 5 1922. w.
Putnam County Herald. Published D ? 1929 - Ja 2 1969. w.sw.
Putnam County Herald & Upper Cumberland News. F 17 1927-D? 1929
Semi - Weekly Putnam County Herald. Published O 9 1922-F 14 1927.
Tennessee Pictorial Dispatch. Published Ag 14 1963 - Ap 14 1965. w.
Upper Cumberland News. Published Ja 3 1923 - F? 1927. w.

Monterey (Putnam Co.) Newspapers

Hilltop Express. Published Ap 25 2000 - present. w.
Mountain Star. Published O 7 1993 - Ag 15 1996. w.
Putnam Star. Published Ag 26 1996 - Ja 27 2000. w.
Standing Stone Press. O 11 1979 - Fall 1984 ?

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Newspaper.com - [Putnam County Herald](#) Cookeville, Tenn. 1911 – 1921

Genealogybank.com - [Putnam County Herald](#) Cookeville, Tenn. 1911 – 1921

Chronicling America –

- [1. Herald-citizen. \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 1972-current](#)
- [2. Hilltop express. \(Monterey, Tenn.\) 2000-current](#)
- [3. The Cookeville chronicle. \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 1877-18??](#)
- [4. The Cookeville citizen. \[volume\] \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 1960-1969](#)
- [5. The Cookeville courier. \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 1891-1???](#)
- [6. The Cookeville free press. \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 1963-1963](#)
- [7. Cookeville herald-citizen. \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 1969-1972](#)
- [8. The Cookeville news. \[volume\] \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 186?-187?](#)
- [9. The Cookeville press. \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 188?-19??](#)
- [10. Cookeville times. \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 185?-18??](#)
- [11. Dispatch. \(Cookeville Tenn.\) 1965-1994](#)
- [12. The Middle Tennessean. \[volume\] \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 1873-1876](#)
- [13. Putnam County herald and Upper Cumberland news. \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 1927-192?](#)
- [14. Putnam County herald. \[online resource\] \(Cookeville, Tennessee\) 1903-1922](#)
- [15. Putnam County herald. \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 192?-1969](#)
- [16. Putnam County herald. \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 1903-1922](#)
- [17. Putnam star. \(Monterey, Tenn.\) 1996-current](#)
- [18. Mountain star. \(Monterey, Tenn.\) 1993-1996](#)
- [19. The Semi-weekly Putnam County herald. \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 1922-1927](#)
- [20. Upper Cumberland news. \(Cookeville, Tenn.\) 1923-1927](#)

Selected Published County Histories

Tennessee State Archives & Library

- Algood Story, 1857-1935 (Algood Extension Homemaker Club History Committee, 1986)
- Brassell Hangings of Putnam County, Tennessee (Spurlock, 1981) *[name index]**
- Cookeville and Putnam County (Friends of the Cookeville History Museum, 2008)
- Heritage of Putnam County, Tennessee (Putnam County Heritage Book Committee, 2008) *[name index]**
- History of Putnam County, Tennessee (McClain, 1925)*
- Putnam County, Tennessee, 1850-1970 (DeLozier, 1979) *[name index]*
- Railroading in Putnam County (Cookeville Depot Museum, 1987)*
- Siftings from Putnam County, Tennessee: Towns Communities People (Hopson, 1991) *[name index]**
- Social Survey of Putnam County, Tennessee (Thompson, 1920)
- Stray Leaves From Putnam County History: Pioneer Families, Sights and Sounds From the Past, Old School Groups, Civil War Soldiers (Hopson, 1993) *[name index]*

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Selected Published County Records

Tennessee State Archives & Library

- 1862 Tax List, Putnam County, Tennessee (Tate, 1996) [*name index*]*
- 1870 United States Census of Putnam County, Tennessee (McGee, 1989) [*name index*]*
- 1880 Census Putnam County, Tennessee (Sistler, 1990) [*alphabetical by head of household*]
- 1880 United States Census of Putnam County, Tennessee (McGee, 1989) [*name index*]
- 1900 Putnam County Census (Wilkerson, 1994) [*name index*]
- 1930 Census, Putnam County, Tennessee (Gann, 2005) [*name index*]*
- Cookeville-Crossville, Tennessee, Polk City Directory : Including Putnam and Cumberland Counties (1997)
- Cookeville-Sparta Tennessee Polk City Directory: Including the following communities: Baxter, Bloomington Springs, Buffalo Valley, Cookeville (2002, 2003, 2015 - 2019)
- Cumberland Co., Tennessee, Fentress Co., Tennessee, Jackson Co., Tennessee, Loudon Co., Tennessee, Morgan Co., Tennessee, Overton Co., Putnam Co., [1891 enumeration of male voters] (Reed, 1990) [*name index for each county*]
- First Families of Putnam County, Tennessee: Family Group Sheets of Putnam County Pioneers and Early Settlers (First Families of Putnam County, TN, 2014) [*name index*]
- Marriage Records of Putnam County, Tennessee, 1878-1882 (Smith, 1996) [*name index*]
- Obituaries from the Putnam County Herald, 1903-1915 (Freeman, 2014) [*alphabetical with name index*]
- Polk's Cookeville (Putnam County, Tenn.) City Directory Including Algood (1961)
- Private Acts of Putnam County, Tennessee (McIntyre, 1984)
- Putnam County GPS Gazetteer (Barnes, 2014)
- Putnam County Marriages [1879-1895] (Parsley & Gilbert, 1998) [*alphabetical by groom; bride index*]
- Putnam County, Tennessee, 1910 Census (Wilkerson, 1992) [*name index*]
- Putnam County, Tennessee Cemeteries (Patton & Gilbert, 1995) [*name index*]
- Putnam County, Tennessee, Circuit Court Minutes, 1842-1856 (WPA, 1941) [*name index*]
- Putnam County, Tennessee Death Records: 1914-1925 (Goolsby & Freeman, 200?) [*name index*]
- Putnam County, Tennessee Death Records, 1926-1935 (Freeman, 2003) [*name index*]
- Putnam County, Tennessee Death Records, 1936-1945 (Freeman, 2004?) [*name index*]
- Putnam County, Tennessee, Miscellaneous Records [diaries, letters, wills, inventories] (Garrett & Porter, 1998)*
- Putnam County, Tennessee, Tax Book, 1854-55 (WPA, 1936) [*name index*]

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- Tennessee, Records of Putnam County: Family Records Including Carlen, Jared, Huddleston, Hargis, Maddux and Richmond Families (WPA, 1937) [*name index*]
- Tennessee, Records of Putnam County: Miscellaneous Records (Diaries, Letters, Wills, Indentures, Etc.) (WPA, 1936) [*name index*]
- Tennessee, Records of Putnam County: Richard F. Cooke's Survey or Plat Book, 1825-1839 (WPA, 1939) [*name index*]
- US Census Putnam County, Tennessee, 1860 (McComb, 1989) [*surname index*]*

Selected Manuscripts Material

Tennessee State Archives & Library

- Hall & Washburn Law Firm (Putnam County, Tenn.) Daybook, 1848-1859 (Microfilm Manuscript #1644, 1 reel)
- S. D. Burton Account Book. White Plains, 1849-1862 (Microfilm Manuscript #434, 1 reel)
- White County Cemetery Records, 1762-1970 (Microfilm Manuscript #784, 1 reel)

Maps

- [TDOT Map of Putnam County](#)
- [Putnam County - 1888](#)
- [Putnam County Road System \(1911\)](#)
- [TnGenWeb Project = Maps Our Ancestors Followed](#)

Cemeteries

- [Putnam County Cemeteries - Find-a Grave](#)
- [Putnam County Cemeteries - USGenWeb](#)
- [Putnam County Cemeteries - Genealogy Trails](#)
- [Putnam County Cemeteries - TNGenWeb \(Cemetery\)](#)

Bibliography

- [The Land Laws of Tennessee \(Whitney, 1891\) Google Books](#)
- [Guide to Public Vital Statistics in Tennessee \(WPA 1941\)](#)

TSLA = Tennessee State Library & Archives
 GRH&GC = Germantown Regional History & Genealogical Center
 MPL = Memphis Public Library

Library Titles	Author / Date	TSLA	GRH&GC	MPL
"Cookeville's 109th cavalry troop." THQ 53 (Winter 1994), pp. 228-245.	Brinker, William J., 1994	Y		
"Dark & mysterious channels": the creation of TN Polytechnic Institute. THQ 48 (Fall, 1989), pp. 144- 150.	Neufeldt, Harvey G. & W. Calvin Dickinson, 1989	Y		
"Switching for water." TN Folklore Soc. Bull. 21, pp. 108- 111.	Rogers, E.G., 1955	Y		

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"The ballad of the Braswell boys -- a Putnam County incident." TN Folklore Soc. Bull. 46 pp. 25-30.	Hudelston, Jesse, 1980	Y		
"The Civil War & its aftermath in Putnam County." THQ 38, pp. 436-461.	DeLozier, Mary J., 1979	Y		
"The pottery industry of Dekalb, White & Putnam counties." THQ 30 pp. 110-112.	Webb, Thomas G., 1971	Y		
1860 Perry County, Tennessee census: including slave schedule and mortality schedule with full name index.	Malone, Royleta Clopton., 1988		Y	
1870 United States census of Putnam County, Tennessee.	McGee, Norman T., 1989		Y	
A history of Putnam County, TN	McClain, Walter S., 1925	Y		
A light on the Cumberland Plateau: the story of Baxter Seminary.	Matthews, Ruth R., 1975	Y		
A recently-found iron meteorite from Cookeville, Putnam County, TN.	Merrill, George P., 1917	Y		
A socioeconomic analysis of non-migrants, return migrants, & primary migrants in Putnam County, TN. UT thesis	Kailasam, Ramachandran, 1978	Y		
A time for looking back: Putnam County veterans, their families, & the Vietnam War.	Brinker, William J., 1961	Y		
Address of Ernest H. Boyd on the part TN has played in the history of the Union.	Boyd, Ernest H., 1899	Y		
Algood School, 1892-1992.	Algood School Alumni Assoc., 1992	Y		
Baxter, TN.	Dyer, Quimby, 1924	Y		
Building numbers & streets for the city of Algood, TN, Putnam County.	Lutin, Philip A., 1966	Y		
Community data: Cookeville & Putnam County, TN.	1961	Y		
Cookeville in retrospect.	Whitney, Gertrude., 1943	Y		
Elmer Lincoln Wirt, editor & politician: a study of grassroots populism & progressivism in TN.	Watters, George W., 1973	Y		
Enduring memories: growing up in Dry Valley the heart of the Upper Cumberland. Cookeville, the author, 1984. 75 pp.	Smith, Flavious J., 1984	Y		
Heritage of Putnam County, Tennessee	Putnam County Heritage Book Committee (TN). 2008		Y	

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History of Putnam County, Tennessee	McClain, Walter Stephen, 1925			Y
Land grant genealogy: North Carolina warrants, surveys & surveyor plats, 1779-1804	Masters, Jack, 2011		Y	
Marriage records of Putnam County, Tennessee, 1878-1882	Smith, Willie D., 1996			Y
Marriage records of Putnam County, Tennessee, 1878-1882. S	Smith, Willie D., 1996		Y	
Minutes of the circuit court of Putnam County, 1842-1856.	US WPA, 1941		Y	
Our Confederate ancestors: buried in Cumberland, Putnam, Van Buren, and White counties, Tennessee	Tompkins, Sally Louisa, 2007			Y
Pictorial history of Putnam County, TN.	Cookeville, First American Bank, 1988	Y		
Putnam Co., TN, miscellaneous records - Tennessee records of Putnam County, miscellaneous records, diaries, letters, wills, indentures, etc., 1936. "WPA transcript	Garrett, Rhea E. Porter, Matilda A. Byron Sistler, 1998			Y
Putnam County, Tennessee Bible, family and tombstone records.	US WPA		Y	
Putnam County, Tennessee diaries, letters, wills, & other records	US WPA		Y	
Putnam County, Tennessee: Richard F. Cooke's survey or plat book, 1825-1839.	US WPA		Y	
Putnam County, TN, 1850-1970.	DeLozier, Mary J., 1979	Y		
Railroading in Putnam County	Cookeville Depot Museum, 1987	Y		
Recollections of a long life. Lebanon, n.p., 1930. 26 pp.	Grime, John H., 1930	Y		
Siftings from Putnam County, Tennessee : towns, communities, people	Hopson, Mary, 1991			Y
Siftings from Putnam County, TN: towns, communities, people.	Hopson, Mary, 1991	Y		
Standing Stone, TN, Monterey, early history.	Dillard, John R., 1989	Y		
Stray leaves from Putnam County history: pioneer families, sights & sounds from the past, old school groups, Civil War soldiers. Cookeville, the author, 1990. 296 pp.	Hopson, Mary, 1990	Y		

