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THE TENNESSEE MAGAZINE

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Grand Ole Opry Turns 100

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These deceptively quick recipes are the perfect remedy for pop-in visitors and the winter blahs.

Recipes by Tammy Algood



THIS PAGE

Shortbread is delicious, requires only three ingredients you likely have on hand and is super simple to make — perfect for when you have unexpected company on the way. See this recipe and more in A Taste of Tennessee on page 40.

ABOUT THE COVER

The town of Calderwood (in Blount County) is long gone, but the Calderwood Methodist Church building still stands alongside its cemetery. See page 14 to learn about more of Tennessee's ghost towns.. Tennessee History for Kids photo

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Mission Statement

CEMC provides safe, affordable and reliable services the cooperative way by maintaining a dedicated, highly skilled workforce guided by cooperative values and principles and a commitment to excellence.

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Between the Lines

News from your community

Understanding factors that impact your energy bills

February brings some of the coldest weather of the year, and as our home heating systems work harder and longer to keep us warm, we typically see higher energy bills.

There are a few key factors that affect electricity prices as well as a few ways you can make a meaningful impact on home energy savings.

When you receive your monthly bill from Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, you're provided with a summary of how much electricity you used during the billing cycle. If you manage your account online, you can dive deeper into your energy use details and track how your electricity use increased on specific days such as during a cold snap or when you had guests staying with you.

But you might be surprised to learn that beyond your monthly energy consumption, there are external factors that can impact the cost of electricity.

CEMC purchases electricity from the Tennessee Valley Authority at a wholesale cost; then we deliver that power to our local communities. The cost of generating and transmitting electricity accounts for a significant portion of the cost to provide electric service — and fuel costs fluctuate based on supply and demand.

While we can't control the weather, we can review weather patterns and forecasts to prepare for times of extreme cold or heat — periods when we know the demand for electricity will increase. But when temperatures become extremely cold and the demand for electricity spikes, the price of electricity can also increase.



By Chris A. Davis
*General Manager,
Cumberland Electric
Membership Corporation*

Federal energy policies and regulations can have a profound impact on electricity costs. As energy generation shifts to the use of more renewable sources and stricter regulations for traditional, always-available fuel sources such as natural gas and coal plants, costly upgrades and technologies must be constructed and deployed.

While many of these external factors that impact electricity costs are out of our control, we all have the power to manage our energy use at home. The most effective way to lower use is thermostat management. Since heating and cooling account for a major portion of home energy use, adjusting the thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting can help you save energy and money. Remember to service your heating and cooling system annually and replace dirty filters as needed.

Be sure to seal air leaks around windows, doors and other areas where gaps are possible. This will help your heating and cooling system work less and improve the overall comfort of your home.

CEMC is your local energy partner, and we're here to help. Visit cemc.org to learn about our efficiency programs designed to help you save. As always, we will continue working diligently to provide you with reliable power at an affordable cost.

How a Safe Step Walk-In Tub can change your life

Remember when...

Think about the things you loved to do that are difficult today — going for a walk or just sitting comfortably while reading a book. And remember the last time you got a great night's sleep?

As we get older, health issues or even everyday aches, pains and stress can prevent us from enjoying life.

So what's keeping you from having a better quality of life?

Check all the conditions that apply to you.

Personal Checklist:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arthritis | <input type="checkbox"/> Dry Skin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility Issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lower Back Pain | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Circulation |

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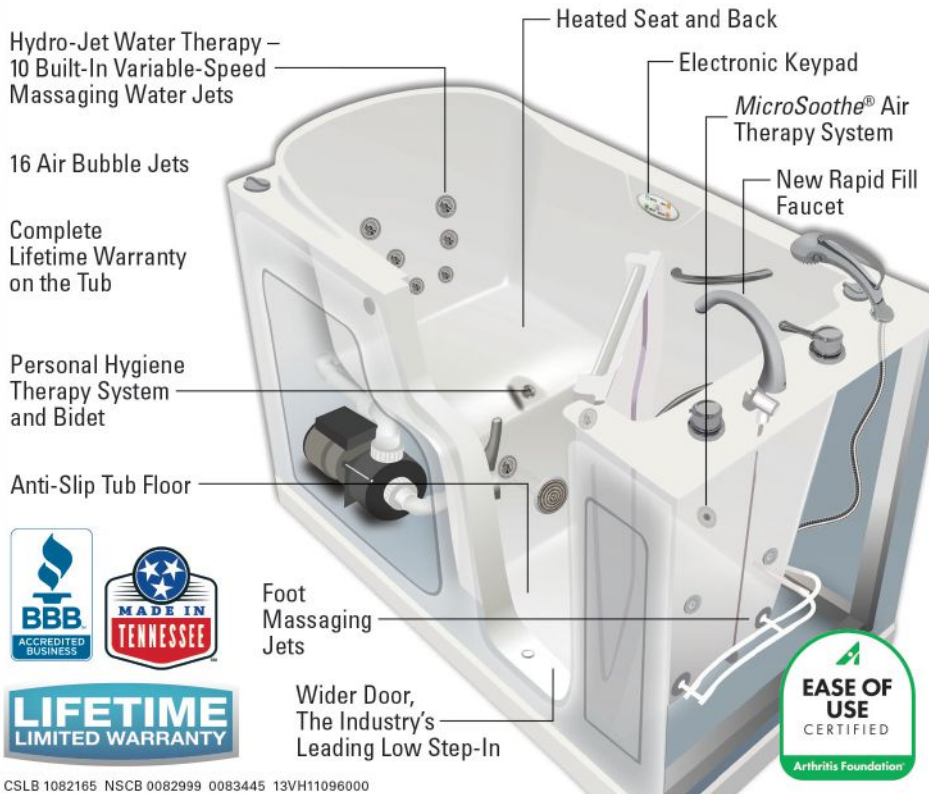
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TENNESSEE TODAY

Viewpoint

Football lessons and rivalries

“Are you all-in?” As I watched another season of college football, that is a phrase that seems to frequently be spoken by the coaches and players to demonstrate their commitment to the game and to their teams. For some, it means a total commitment to win. Period. End of story. At all costs. To the exclusion of everything else.

For others, being “all-in” might refer to each person’s adherence to a plan in which they play a particular role. College football legend Dabo Swinney was speaking of this during his very first press conference after being named the head coach at Clemson University in 2008. “My job is to lead these guys, love these guys, to get ’em to love each other ... to believe in each other ... and circle the wagons and believe in one another,” he said. As he continued to describe his philosophy toward building a team, he concluded, “We’re gonna play as one, one heartbeat, everybody playing as one ... and (our players) better be *all-in*.”

I think Coach Swinney was challenging his players to commit to their roles on the team, not just individual success. Because the way to accomplish individual success in a team sport is to embrace the role you’ve been given and focus on the next play. Clemson’s success since that time speaks to how powerful a philosophy “all-in” can be. His teams have gone 174-44, won two national championships, placed countless players into the NFL and been a model for integrity.

What does this mean to you and me? We are the folks watching the coaches and players from the comfort of our living rooms. We don’t have the responsibility or the talent to be on the field, so none of this really applies to us. Right?

I disagree. Sports can be an amazing demonstration of principles and actions that you can apply to your own life and responsibilities. It’s why I have encouraged my own boys to play sports. Other group activities like band, chorus, debate team, student government and

many more provide the same experience for young people of all likes and abilities.

But what about as adults? I challenge you to consider the roles you play in your life. With your family, in your workplace, as a member of your community, at your place of worship — these are all not unlike a football team. These groups are made up of many people who contribute to the group in different ways. Do you contribute positively? Did you serve others in a way that focused your efforts on the success of the group, rather than just your own recognition or rewards? In any given week, for what purpose are you “all-in”?

Those are tough questions, so don’t be discouraged if the answer isn’t apparent. I know I can get so focused on accomplishing what I need to do every day that I might not focus on the things that truly matter. I fail. I worry. I let people down. And you do, too. But rather than focusing on our failures, being all-in means that we think about the next thing we can do that moves us closer to where we want to be. When a quarterback throws an interception that’s returned for a touchdown, he has to go right back out on the field and try again.

As Tennesseans, we should definitely take a moment to celebrate the 2024 college football season. The University of Memphis finished in the Top 25 and won a bowl game. The University of Tennessee made the College Football Playoff field as one of the 12 best teams in country. Vanderbilt had a winning season and beat Georgia Tech in a bowl game. And, more importantly, Alabama and Auburn were 0-3 against teams from Tennessee. ■



By Mike Knotts

Tennessee Electric
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Celebrating 30 years of creativity

Honoring the work of Ron Bell

Ron Bell, art director for *The Tennessee Magazine* as well as the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association, retired in January after 30 years of sharing his talents with the magazine and its readers. Since starting in 1994, Bell has designed more than 360 editions of *The Tennessee Magazine*.

“Ron has been an asset for *The Tennessee Magazine* and the state’s electric cooperatives,” says Chris Kirk, editor of *The Tennessee Magazine*. “His talents are seen in feature story layouts, illustrations, ads, posters, T-shirts, certificates — even electric co-op logos.”

One of the most iconic staples of the magazine can trace its roots back to Bell. “I hide the flag,” Bell jokingly says about what he has done over the last three decades.

Aside from a career of creativity, Bell has made lifelong friendships and says that’s what he will remember and miss the most. “I might have to pop in the office from time to time just to share a joke or two,” Bell says.

“We wish him years of relaxation, creativity and adventure in retirement,” Kirk says.

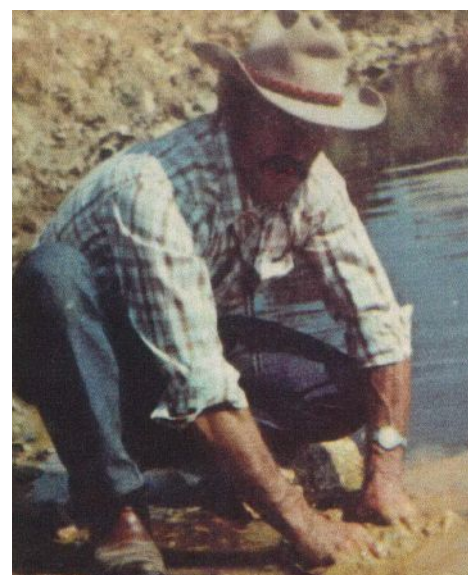
While *The Tennessee Magazine* team will miss working daily with Bell, thankfully the publication hasn’t seen the last of him — or his alter ego “Antsy McClain” — as he plans to continue writing his “My Tennessee Notebook” column.

“I enjoy my career in music, which I will be continuing,” Bell says. “I’ll keep traveling around the country as well as Canada and Europe, playing music as I have since 1992.” You can follow along with Antsy McClain and the Trailer Park Troubadours at unhitched.com.



50 YEARS AGO IN THE TENNESSEE MAGAZINE

The cover of the February 1975 edition of *The Tennessee Magazine* featured a reproduction of Howard P. Lane’s “Winter Washday.” Inside, articles covered the Tennessee Valley Authority board chair, slow cooker recipes and the Coker Creek Autumn Gold Festival (below). View the entire issue at tnmagazine.org.



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TENNESSEE EVENTS

Festivals, celebrations and other happenings around the state



Photograph courtesy of the U.S. Air Force Band of Mid-America

The U.S. Air Force Band of Mid-America will present a series of concerts in Tennessee. These 90-minute concerts will feature the unit's 45-member concert band and will honor our nation and its veterans, share stories of our heritage and reflect on all that makes us flourish as individuals and as a country. These are family-friendly, all-ages events.

Feb. 14 • Hayes Concert Hall, Chattanooga, 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 15 • Tullahoma High School, 6 p.m.

Feb. 16 • University of Tennessee Cox Auditorium, Knoxville, 3 p.m.

Feb. 17 • Niswonger Performing Arts Center, Greeneville, 6 p.m.

Feb. 18 • East Tennessee State University Martin Center for the Arts, Johnson City, 7 p.m.

Feb. 19 • Tennessee Tech University Wattenbarger Auditorium, Cookeville, 7:30 p.m.

Admission to these performances is free and open to the public. Tickets are required. Please go to afbandtix.org for all ticket and show information.

West Tennessee

Jan. 31-Feb. 2 • 21st Annual Reelfoot Lake Eagle Festival, Reelfoot Lake State Park Visitors Center, Tiptonville. 731-253-9652 or tnstateparks.com/parks/reelfoot-lake

Feb. 2 • Memphis Restaurant Association Food Festival, The Kent, Memphis. 901-860-5086 or memphisrestaurants.com/events

Feb. 8 • Shaken and Stirred — Valentines Pops, Carl Perkins Civic Center, Jackson. 731-427-6440 or thejacksonsymphony.org

Middle Tennessee

Now-Feb. 9 • Zoolumination, Nashville Zoo. 615-833-1534 or nashvillezoo.org/zoolumination

Feb. 6-14 • Mayberry Valentine Dinner Theatre, Granville. 931-653-4151 or granvilletn.com

Feb. 22 • Hot Chocolate Run Nashville, Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park, Nashville. info@hotchocolate15k.com or hotchocolate15k.com/city/nashville

Feb. 22-23 • Nashville Ballet: Paul Vastering's "The Sleeping Beauty," Tennessee Performing Arts Center, Nashville. 615-297-2966 or nashvilleballet.com/the-sleeping-beauty

March 1 • Oreo Festival, Hop Springs, Murfreesboro. 931-952-0472 or brianna-victory-events.com/events

East Tennessee

Feb. 1-15 • Romance at Ruby, Ruby Falls, Chattanooga. 423-821-2544 or rubyfalls.com/romance-at-ruby

Feb. 15 • Johnson City Symphony Orchestra presents "Hope and Honor," ETSU Martin Center for the Arts, Johnson City. 423-926-8742 or jcsymphony.com

Feb. 28 • Heroes of Southern Appalachia, Museum of Appalachia, Clinton. 865-494-7680 or museumofappalachia.org

Submit your events

Complete the form at tnmagazine.org or email events@tnelectric.org.

Information must be received at least two months ahead of the event date, and we accept submissions up to a year in advance. Due to the great demand for space in each month's issue, we cannot guarantee publication. Find a complete listing of submissions we've received at tnmagazine.org/events.

My TENNESSEE Notebook

Written and Illustrated by Antsy McClain

From Valentine's Day to the Cooties, who we are as adults is largely shaped on grade school playgrounds

There were many maladies and sicknesses to endure when I was a kid — measles, mumps, chicken pox — but none were scarier than the Cooties Outbreak of 1975.

The Cooties didn't take any lives, as I recall ¹, but it caused irreparable damage to the self esteem and emotional well-being of countless grade schoolers in the 1970s and '80s. You might have been one of them.

For those unfamiliar with the Cooties, I will do my best to explain. For reasons I can only call malicious prejudice based on class, clothing and/or outward appearance, an unfortunate child would be singled out to have the Cooties. The committee who took it upon themselves to make such designations were invariably the more popular, better looking, better dressed kids. But the one thing they had most in common was this: They were mean.

After appointing themselves Cootie Detectors, the mean kids would find some poor, unsuspecting child at recess, sitting on the monkey bars, minding their own business. One of the Cootie Detectors (who we will call Brenda) would tap the shoulder of the Cootie Carrier (who we will call Rachel) and then tap another kid — also minding their own business (we'll

call him Ronnie) — and loudly exclaim, "Ronnie has Rachel's Cooties!"

The entire playground would then shriek in horror and run as far away from the carrier as possible, knowing that contracting the Cooties would mean complete social ostracism, which, just below sudden death or audibly passing gas in class, is the worst thing that could happen to a 12-year-old in grade school.

Not getting rid of the Cooties and carrying them to one's grave doomed one to a life of scorn, ridicule and total failure in every endeavor. ²

Once the Cooties started to spread, it became necessary for every child to inoculate themselves, either by crossing their fingers (the universal symbol of immunity) or by receiving a Cootie shot, which was administered, not surprisingly, by one of the original mean kids who would charge 25 cents to stamp the back of your hand with an inked-up pencil eraser. Brenda reportedly bought a bicycle with the proceeds. This was the first con game or racket to which I was ever exposed, long before pyramid schemes; three-card monte; or health, car and life insurance. ³

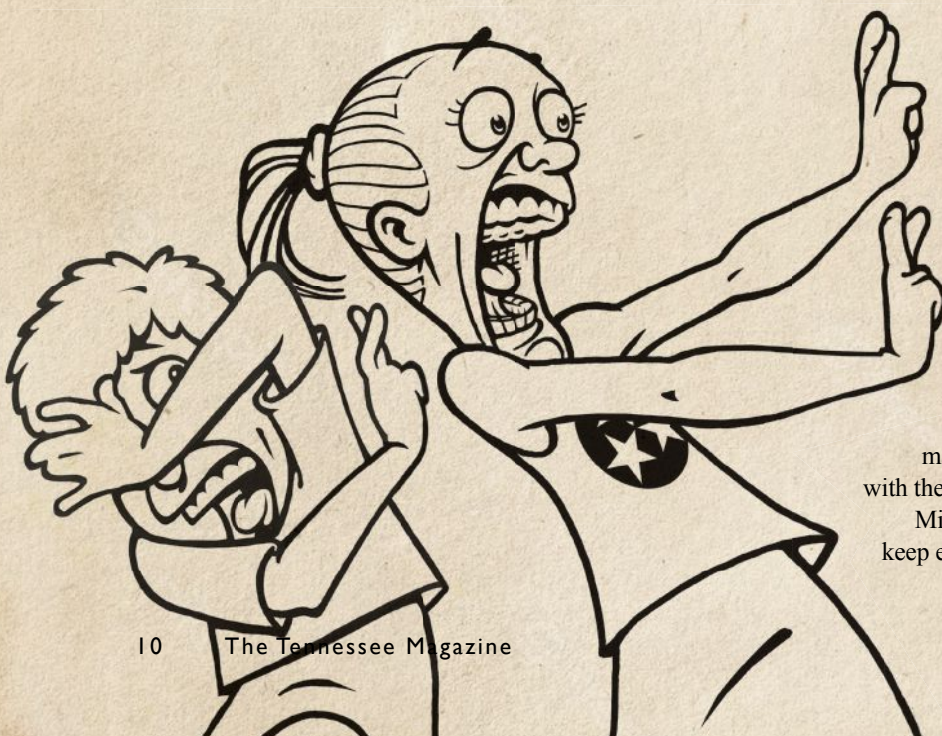
Sadly, I have learned that the Cooties are not eradicated. ⁴

The Cooties are still going strong, passed around on elementary school playgrounds as we speak. Studies show that 88.7% of grade schoolers will contract the Cooties at least once before they are 14. Many contract the disease repeatedly, forgetting to cross their fingers or not being able to afford the 25 cents for a Cootie shot.

Valentine's Day as a third-grader

Valentine's Day in elementary school was littered with social landmines many of us recall with dread. Our participation was mandatory, forced upon us by teachers who made us bring decorated shoeboxes from home with the hopes that they would be filled with love.

Mine was evidently the only family who didn't keep empty shoeboxes lying around, so that year,



¹ Although I remember an incident where John "Blimpy" Campbell was running away from a Cooties "carrier" and ran headlong into a shed, for which he was briefly hospitalized. A Blimpy-shaped dent remained in the aluminum siding of the shed for years afterward. We would gather around it sometimes and recall with reverence how the Cooties Outbreak shaped our lives in much the same way Blimpy shaped the dent in that shed.

² Adults were immune, by the way. This was strictly a childhood disease. If you tried to pass it on to an adult, they'd just look at you like you were crazy. Of course I tried this. I once tapped the playground monitor, math teacher, Ms. Fritz, on the elbow and she just laughed at me demoniacally. It was her normal laugh, actually. She is the reason I hate math.

³ This playground practice might seem like an innocent thing to some, a mere

manifestation of "kids will be kids," but if you've been the target of such ridicule, it can be as damaging as India's caste system, which is also totally arbitrary, made up by the "haves" to exclude the "have nots" from their social circles. These practices are established to keep people in their "place," and I'll bet the caste system also started on a grade school playground generations ago by someone saying, "You've got Rishaan's Cooties!" This can also explain our tendency to create country clubs and elite secret societies like Costco, where membership cards are needed to buy really good rotisserie chicken.

⁴ My 10-year old granddaughter, Anna Jane, reported to me that the Cooties are still very much alive on her school playground in North Carolina. Her face turned grim when I asked her about it, and she said, "Yes, some kids play that game. I don't like it." Anna Jane, a sweet,

sensitive child — who also happens to be extremely intelligent, very talented and quite beautiful — said it made her sad to see some of the other kids get picked on like that. I then made chocolate chip pancakes for her and her little brother, Henry, who is also quite amazing, super intelligent and unbelievably handsome. If we ever meet, dear reader, I have pictures. Lots of pictures. You'll see what I mean. I also have three other remarkable people who call me Papa, and I have photos of them as well, which I know you'll love to look at, one after the other. There's a video of 7-year-old Emma singing "I Want to Be an Elf" at her Christmas concert that is particularly remarkable. I don't know how "America's Got Talent" hasn't snatched her up yet. Her brother, David, is also extraordinarily awesome in every way, and the newest, Dawson, just a few weeks old now, should be on labels of baby food, I swear. Anyway ...

I hastily emptied a box of Wheaties and glued some hearts on it for my Valentine's box, cutting a slit somewhere near Bruce Jenner's head for the card slot.

The Valentine's cards were sold in sheets with perforated edges that could be torn out and personalized. We would pick them out at the grocery store. Favorite pop icons like Bugs Bunny or Daffy Duck from "Looney Tunes" would don the full-color front while the back was left blank for writing. Each package included three sizes, and the larger ones were reserved for that someone special, going down in size and, well, importance. The small cards were the most plentiful, and if you got a tiny one with only the person's name on the back, it was considered a third grade brush off, as if to say, "Don't get any ideas. Ms. Beason made me give you this."

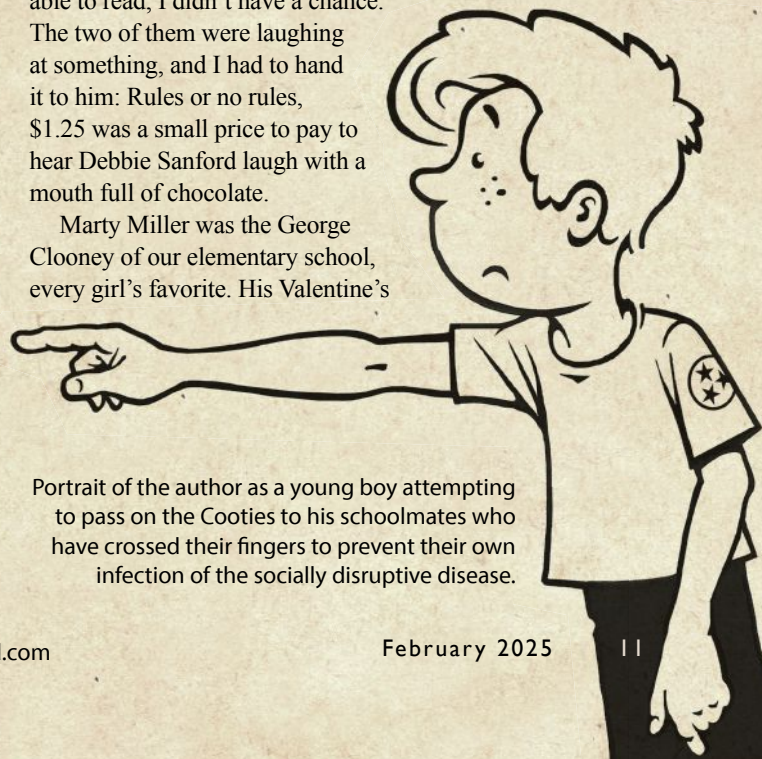
The message was clear, misconstrued only by the most dense among us. My friend, Larry Strauss, for example, carried an undying flame in his heart for Sara Taylor. When she wrote her name on the back of a Tweety Bird card that included the phrase, "Be Mine" on it, he swooned. But everybody knew that "Be Mine" was like saying "Season's Greetings," and it didn't really mean anything. I even showed him one of my own Tweety Bird "Be Mine" cards from Vanessa Swanson, who was clearly out of my league, but Larry didn't listen. And that was a good thing, as it turned out. He and Sara have been married 37 years now. They have three kids and a new grandbaby.

As soon as we got to class the morning of Valentine's Day, we placed our boxes on our desks and went from desk to desk, depositing our personalized cards in every box. I chose one of the larger cards for Debbie Sanford. She had long, deep dimples that framed her smile like parentheses and big brown eyes that

seemed too big for her head. I opened her lid to put my card inside, and I saw dozens of other, bigger cards, glittered up and adorned with cut-out hearts, some with candy taped to the outside. Brian Spencer had even stuffed a Whitman's Sampler in there. It was just a four-piece, but those were, like, a buck twenty-five. Where did he have that kind of money? And no one said we could give out Whitman's Samplers. Brian was clearly breaking the rules. I saw Debbie at recess later, daintily eating those little chocolate squares with Brian hovering over her casually. He had been held back a year, so he was a foot taller than the rest of us, and despite him barely being able to read, I didn't have a chance.

The two of them were laughing at something, and I had to hand it to him: Rules or no rules, \$1.25 was a small price to pay to hear Debbie Sanford laugh with a mouth full of chocolate.

Marty Miller was the George Clooney of our elementary school, every girl's favorite. His Valentine's



Portrait of the author as a young boy attempting to pass on the Cooties to his schoolmates who have crossed their fingers to prevent their own infection of the socially disruptive disease.

box was always stuffed with large, personalized, multicolored envelopes containing those big 75 cent cards our mothers would read thoughtfully at the drug store. I don't think my whole package of Valentines cracked a 50-cent piece, and here these girls were dropping major coin on one guy. Lucky stiff.

We all looked at Marty with envy as he sat with his gluttonous, foil-covered shoebox on the corner of his desk. Some girls clearly gave him two or three. Mathematically, it wasn't possible to have so many Valentines cards in a class this size. I shook my Wheaties box and heard several small cards hitting the sides with a sad, lonely flutter.

Toward the end of the day, however, I opened my Wheaties box to see a medium-sized card from a sweet girl named Annie Meadows. She was a cute, tomboyish farm girl with kind, green eyes who incidentally ended the Cooties pandemic on our playground later that year.

Tired of the nonsense, Annie exclaimed loudly to everyone at recess that she was born with a natural immunity to the bug.

"All I have to do is hug everyone on this playground," she yelled, locking eyes with mean Brenda. "And you will all be immune forever!" We uncrossed our fingers and ran to Annie, who gave us each a warm hug. She smelled like hay from her farm and spearmint from the gum she was happily chomping. We left her arms and filed past mean Brenda with a sneer, some of us sticking out our tongues in brave defiance. The Cooties were no more, ended with the same artificial, made-up fanfare as when they arrived.

We would all grow up and move on with our lives, but the residue of those rituals lingers on to this day. We're adults



now, but we still carry around those foil-covered shoeboxes with all the glitter and construction paper, the memories roiling around inside us. We can take them out and look at them and sigh, sifting through the joys, the fears and the wounds each brittle little Valentine's card might have contained. And I was lucky to have guideposts that helped me through: the Annie Meadows and the teachers who smiled when they saw me and made me think I was special.

I got through the Cooties and Valentine's Day — even that awkward middle school dance a few years later. All the social landmines of elementary school were survived with the help of a few good humans.

Walking home that Valentine's Day with my Wheaties box tucked under my arm, I thought a lot about life. It was nice to know that love will always be love and that life doesn't have to be complicated.

Despite the drama of elementary school playgrounds, it's nice to know that some things never change — like Wheaties, Looney Tunes and guys like Bruce Jenner, who will always be there to show me the way. ■

Listen to "The Last Man on Earth to Get the Cooties"

*Antsy McClain is a Nashville-adjacent singer-songwriter, author and graphic artist who is proudly Cootie-free. Go to unhitched.com for his books, music and events. Use this QR code to download "The Last Man on Earth to Get the Cooties" FREE to readers of **The Tennessee Magazine**. Yes, he really wrote a song about this.*



A brief, not very helpful history of Valentine's Day

There are more than 10,000 saints recognized by the Catholic church today, and a good many of them are martyrs, killed violently for their convictions. Saint Valentine is no exception.

Valentine's Day has its origins during the reign of Emperor Claudius II (A.D. 214-270), a ruthless military leader who was known for conquering Britain. Julius Caesar attempted to conquer Britain but failed and now only has a salad named after him.

Wanting to be more than a namesake for a simple but delicious salad containing ground anchovies, Claudius II put all of his eggs, so to speak, in one basket: war. He famously outlawed marriage for young, military-age men because he saw their only value as soldiers in battle. Claudius II had a lot of territory to conquer, and married men with children would just get in the way. Let's face it, all the letter writing and pining for loved ones are simply counterproductive to world domination.

A young priest named Valentine saw this decree as government overreach and secretly performed marriages of young couples, hence gaining him a reputation as a bit of a romantic. Valentine was imprisoned once Claudius II found out. While in prison, it is believed that the first Valentine's greeting was written to a young girl. He signed it, "From your Valentine."

He was beheaded, but other priests, inspired by Valentine's rebellion to Claudius II, continued the marital practices despite great risk to their lives.

It was a poet, not surprisingly, who first romanticized the holiday, officially turning it from a religious symbol to what we now know as a day for honoring lovers.

Geoffrey Chaucer, famous for "The Canterbury Tales," wrote "Parlement of Foules" in the 1300s. It's some 700 lines, more than 100 pages of, well, birds trying to mate. The plot goes like this: Three male eagles have their eye on a female eagle, and drama ensues during the competitive

courtship. Not one of the eagles, as it turns out, is successful. And this explains real life and love better than any poem I've ever read. I can only assume the female eagle settled down with a nice egret somewhere with a degree in finance and a very comfortable nest in the south of France. And who could blame her?

It is my suspicion that, if not for our hormones that pull us together, men and women would live completely separate lives until we died off, leaving behind a lot of really bad art and poetry.

Sometime in the 18th century, friends and loved ones across Europe and all over America began exchanging greeting cards with wishes of love and devotion. These cards began to be called valentines and are still called that today. Greeting card companies, candy makers and florists soon saw the enormous earning potential of manipulating our basic need for human connection and cashed in on our collective wish to love and be loved. ■

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19 ghost towns in Tennessee (that are not underwater)



Wilder, in 1933, and the same location 90 years later. Wilder was a coal mining town entirely owned by the Fentress Coal and Coke Company. Like many company-owned mining towns, there is nothing left of Wilder other than a cemetery. Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum and Tennessee History for Kids photos

Four years ago, I wrote a long story about “underwater ghost towns of Tennessee,” focusing on places permanently flooded by the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Army Corps of Engineers. That 2021 article might have led to the impression that manmade dams are responsible for most of the ghost towns in Tennessee history — which is not true.

In fact, this article is about 19 ghost towns in Tennessee that are not underwater.

All the communities cited in this article once had residents, businesses, churches and schools. In many cases, something important happened in the towns on this list. But these communities don’t exist today, to the best of my knowledge.

I should also point out that this is not a complete list. My guess is that Tennessee has more than a hundred ghost towns.

Here are 19 Tennessee “ghost towns” that I know about, organized by category.

‘Flatboat/steamboat’ ghost towns (4)

A lot of towns faded in the late 1800s when the railroad replaced the flatboat and steamboat as the dominant method of commercial transportation. Around 1930, when ferries were replaced by bridges, many of these river towns completely vanished from the map.

At one time, the Tipton County community of **Randolph** had residents, churches, hotels, a steamboat landing and a weekly newspaper called the *Randolph Recorder* (which you can read at the Tennessee State Library and Archives). In the early 1830s, Randolph rivaled Memphis to be the largest Tennessee town on the Mississippi River. But the last time I was in Randolph, I saw only one house there.

What happened? The first thing that went wrong was when the mail route went to Memphis rather than Randolph (passengers traveled with the mail, so getting the mail route was a big deal). Cholera hit the town hard

in 1834; according to newspaper accounts, about 40 of Randolph's 350 residents died from it in only a few days.

In 1861, someone got the bright idea of building a Confederate fortress in Randolph. During the Civil War, the Union Army destroyed that fortress and much of the town along with it. The town managed to rebuild, but in 1886, fire destroyed much of the town again.

Today, Randolph is a lovely vantage point from where to see the Mississippi River. But pack a lunch, and make sure you have enough gas to get there and back, because there aren't many businesses in that part of Tipton County.

A few months ago, I wrote about **Gold Dust**, a place on the Mississippi River in Lauderdale County. I have found articles that mention Gold Dust as early as 1920. The main thing I know about Gold Dust is that some members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians were talked into moving there around 1952. Their descendants make up most of West Tennessee's Choctaw community, which is why there is a small Choctaw reservation in Henning.

Ashport was a few miles upstream from Gold Dust. Like Randolph, Ashport was an active steamboat stop in the 1800s. Like Randolph, part of its original location eventually slipped into the Mississippi River. Like Randolph, it doesn't even merit a spot on the official Tennessee map anymore.

However, unlike Randolph, Ashport remained an active community well into the 20th century. As late as the 1930s,

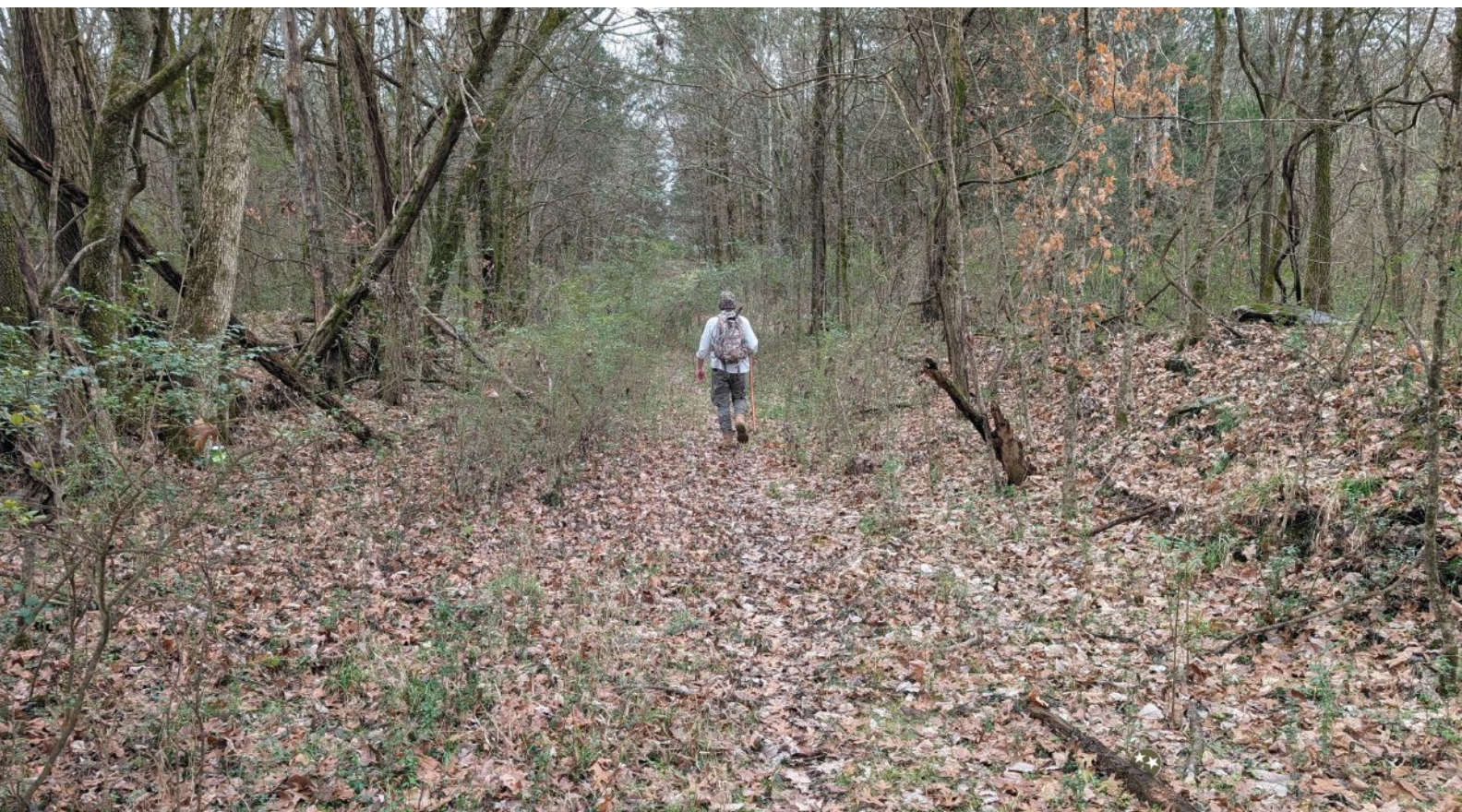
the Commercial Appeal contained stories about riverboats stopping in Ashport as they traveled up and down the Mississippi. And as late as 1949, Ashport still had a hotel.

From about 1950 onward, however, the news from Ashport generally involved prison escapees and floods. In 1975 and again in 1979, Ashport residents were cut off from the outside world for weeks because of flooding. Finally, in 2011, a flood washed away almost every building left in Ashport.

However, here's the thing about backwater flooding and the Mississippi River: It's good for the soil. So even though the town of Ashport is no more, there are fertile cotton and soybean farms in this corner of Tennessee. Many of these farming families attend the Ashport Baptist Church, one of the only institutions that keeps alive the town name.

At the other end of the state, Rhea County contains a reminder that not every abandoned river town is on the Mississippi. The town of **Washington** was organized in 1812 — six years after the Cherokee conceded the land in the 1806 Treaty of Washington (thus the name of the town). Washington remained the seat of Rhea County and most prominent flatboat stop on

Below, Smyrna Middle School teacher Forrest Smith explores the former site of the town of Jefferson. At left, he poses near a collapsed staircase that used to lead to a cellar. Below, he walks down a trail that was once a road featured on all the maps of the day. Tennessee History for Kids photos



the Tennessee River between Knoxville and Chattanooga until the Cincinnati Southern Railway missed the town in 1880.

No one alive today remembers what the town of Washington was like before it declined. But longtime residents of Rhea County recall the Washington Ferry, which operated until 1996.

'No longer on the route' ghost towns (3)

Many sources will tell you that the first road across the Cumberland Plateau started at Fort Southwest Point (in Roane County) and ended at Fort Blount (in Jackson County).

The town around Fort Southwest Point is still there and is called Kingston. The town around Fort Blount was called **Williamsburg**, and it's long gone.

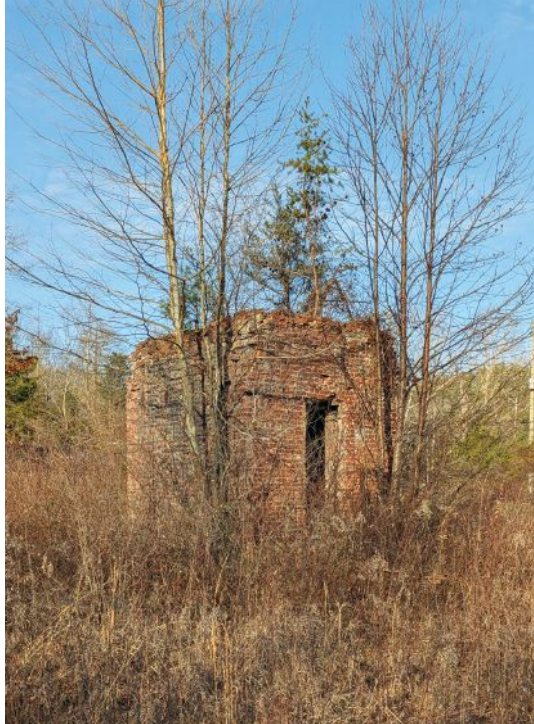
If Williamsburg still existed, it could make this claim: Among the people who spent the night there in the 1790s were Andrew Jackson, John Sevier, and Louis Philippe — King of France from 1830 until 1848.

Williamsburg wasn't a place of note for long. The town declined because someone else came up with a better route across the Cumberland Plateau. That someone was William Walton, and the community he started at the western end of his road is called Carthage.

Four years ago, in my story about underwater ghost towns, I mentioned the Rutherford County community of **Jefferson**. Jefferson was originally created because it was the best place for stagecoaches to cross Stones River, since the river forks there. If you look at early maps of Tennessee, stagecoaches went from Lebanon to Nashville via Jefferson (hardly a direct route!). Jefferson declined after a ferry was opened on Stones River, due east of Nashville. The Rutherford County seat was moved from Jefferson to Murfreesboro in 1814.

Jefferson remained a small but notable community for nearly a century and a half. But in the 1940s, all that remained of Jefferson was bought and torn down by the Army Corps of Engineers when Stones River was dammed and Percy Priest Lake was created. However, as it turns out, the engineers were wrong in their calculations about how much land would be flooded. So the former site of the Jefferson community is still above water.

A few weeks ago, a Rutherford County teacher named Forrest Smith led me to the former site of Jefferson. We found stone walls, roadbeds, abandoned home foundations, a set of stairs descending into a cellar that is now caved in and a lot of trash (some of it old).



A bank vault stands alone in the woods near Wilder, not far from the Wilder cemetery where union organizer Barney Graham is buried. Tennessee History for Kids photo

Finally, there used to be a place called **Port Royal** along the Red River, near the border of Montgomery and Robertson counties. Halfway between Springfield and Clarksville, without a railroad connection, Port Royal declined.

There are two reasons I've put Port Royal on this list. One is because four of the delegates who attended Tennessee's first Constitutional Convention in 1796 were from there. The other

is because Port Royal is now a state historic park.

'Company town' ghost towns (6)

The most important company town in Tennessee history was the Fentress County community of **Wilder** — once owned by the Fentress Coal and Coke Company. In July 1932, workers in Wilder went on strike to protest low pay and unsafe working conditions. Fentress Coal hired replacement workers. During the next few months,



several of the bridges used to haul coal from the mines were damaged or destroyed, and there were many violent incidents against both strikers and replacement workers.

In April 1933, company guards shot and killed union leader Barney Graham in the streets of Wilder. A couple of weeks later, replacement worker B.J. Brewer was ambushed. No one was ever convicted of either murder.

Newspapers all over the country carried news about the Wilder strike and the violence that took place because of it. The strike inspired Myles Horton to start Grundy County's Highlander Folk School — a training ground for the Civil Rights Movement.

Today there is almost nothing left of Wilder, other than a cemetery.

We remember Wilder because of people who died there. Two counties to the southwest, we remember the abandoned coal mining town of **Ravenscroft** because of someone who was born there. Carl Rowan, a member of the Lyndon B. Johnson administration and one of the first African-American syndicated columnists in American history, was born in Ravenscroft. Thanks to the Bon Air Mountain Historical Society, there are historical markers in Ravenscroft and near his birthplace.

Wilder and Ravenscroft were pretty rough communities — as was **Sucktown**. Sucktown (quit snickering) was the name of the town in Marion County where construction workers were housed by the companies that built Hales Bar Dam between 1905 and 1913. It got its name from the series of navigational barriers along the Tennessee River

in that area called The Suck. Judging from newspaper clippings, Sucktown was a rough place, where locals clashed with immigrants brought in to work on the dam. Sucktown was on the north side of what remains of the dam, and I don't think there's anything left of it.

Just upstream from Sucktown is a ghost town called **Shakerag**. With its stone foundations, the abandoned site of Shakerag (now part of the Prentice Cooper State Forest) is a great place to take photos. However, I haven't been able to learn much about Shakerag, in part because almost every state appears to have a ghost town by the same name.

Sucktown and Shakerag were on the "big" Tennessee River. Far upstream, on the Little Tennessee River, there used to be a town called **Calderwood**. Built around 1912 by the Aluminum Company of America (later Alcoa), Calderwood housed hydroelectric dam workers and their families. According to various articles about the place, as many as 2,000 people lived in Calderwood at one time. That number dropped to about 200 by 1940 and a handful by 1960. Today, the only structure left of Calderwood is a small Methodist church.

Finally, if you google the words "Tennessee ghost town," you will find photos that were taken in the former Blount County community of **Elkmont**. As you can read in many books and websites, Elkmont was a lumber town and later a resort town that was eventually abandoned because the Great Smoky Mountains National Park was created in and around it.

Only a handful of structures remain in Elkmont today. What's ironic about Elkmont is that the reason it's abandoned is also the reason it's so famous: If it weren't for the national park, no one outside of Blount County would know where Elkmont was — anymore than the average Tennessean knows where Wilder, Randolph, Washington or Sucktown were. For many years, the park preserved the structures in Elkmont, creating a haven for amateur photographers. Eventually, it allowed nature to reclaim the area.

Above, abandoned stairs at Calderwood, a town that used to exist in Blount County that was once owned by Alcoa. At left, the site of Shakerag is easy to visit because it is part of the Prentice Cooper State Forest. Tennessee History for Kids photos





The cemetery in Wilder, in Fentress County, where famous union organizer Barney Graham was buried. Tennessee History for Kids photo

'The courthouse moved' ghost towns (6)

I've already mentioned three ghost towns that were once county seats. But in the cases of Jefferson, Washington and Williamsburg, I don't think the loss of the courthouse was the reason for the town's decline. Each town faded first for other reasons, and the courthouse was moved after the town declined.

If there is a fourth category of ghost towns, that category would be "towns that were abandoned because they ceased to be the county seat."

Vernon was the county seat of Hickman County. After the borders of Hickman County were changed, Centerville became the county seat in 1823.

Montgomery was the original county seat of Morgan County. By 1870, with the creation of Scott and Campbell counties, Montgomery was no longer even in Morgan County but in Scott County. Therefore, the Morgan County Courthouse was moved to Wartburg.

Monroe was the original county seat of Overton County, but in 1833 the citizens of the county voted to move the courthouse to Livingston.

When McNairy County was formed, **Purdy** was its county seat. Mainly because of the Mobile and Ohio Railroad, the county seat was moved to Selmer in 1891.

Finally, Lewis County wasn't formed until 1843 but had three different county seats in the first half-century of its existence. Originally the Lewis County Courthouse was at **Gordon** and later at **Newburg**. In 1897, the courthouse was moved to a Swiss colony called Hohenwald, where it remains today.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no communities at Vernon, Montgomery, Monroe, Purdy, Gordon or Newburg. There are a couple of historical markers and the ghosts of county mayors, county officials, etc. But that's it. ■

The Bon Air Mountain Historical Society occasionally puts on history fairs. Here, folks are gathered around a display honoring the mining town of Ravenscroft. Tennessee History for Kids photo



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CEMC youth programs deadline is Friday, Feb. 28

Students interested in submitting short stories for the Electric Cooperative Creative Writing Contest and Scholarship Competition, applying for the Senior Scholarship Program or entering the 2026 Calendar Art Contest, mark your calendars for Friday, Feb. 28, which is the deadline for each of Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation's youth programs.

Electric Cooperative Creative Writing Contest and Scholarship Competition

The Electric Cooperative Creative Writing Contest and Scholarship Competition is open to high school juniors within CEMC's service area. To enter, students must write short stories explaining how co-ops are "Energizing Every Moment" by providing communities with energy, education, broadband, economic development and more. Each writer of the top 12 entries will win an expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., in June. Additional details about the 2025 Electric Cooperative Creative Writing Contest

and Scholarship Competition can be found online at cemc.org and youthtour.tnelectric.org.

2026 CEMC Calendar Art Contest

The 2026 Calendar Art Contest is available to students in grades kindergarten through 12 who live within CEMC's service area. Winning entries will receive cash prizes and be featured in CEMC's 2026 calendar.

Entries will be accepted through participating schools, and each grade has been assigned a calendar month to illustrate: **January**, sixth; **February**, seventh; **March**, eighth; **April**, ninth; **May**, 10th; **June**, 11th; **July**, kindergarten; **August**, first; **September**, second; **October**, third; **November**, fourth; and **December**, fifth. Seniors will design the cover.

Senior Scholarship Program

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scholarships of \$1,000 each to qualifying students. Each interested student must submit a completed application, including two letters of reference and an original essay of at least 300 words describing what the student most looks forward to about attending college and how a scholarship, in terms of financial assistance, will help in completing his or her education. Applicants must have also attained a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA, enroll or plan to enroll as a full-time student at an accredited Tennessee college (Murray State and Western Kentucky universities are included) and be a graduating senior whose parents or guardians are members of CEMC and receive electric service from CEMC at his or her primary residence. Applications are available online at **cemc.org**. Children of CEMC, Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association or Tennessee Valley Authority employees, directors or attorneys are not eligible to apply.

For additional information about any of CEMC's youth programs, contact Susie Yonkers,



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community relations coordinator, at 800-987-2362 or by email at syonkers@cemc.org.

Davis elected to co-op association board

Chris A. Davis, general manager of Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, was recently elected to the board of trustees for the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association at the group's 83rd annual meeting in Nashville.

"We welcome and congratulate Davis to our board," says Mike Knotts, CEO of the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association. "We rely on our board members to provide guidance and counsel for the association, and I am confident that Tennessee's co-ops will be well-served thanks to his contributions."

TECA's board of directors helps guide and connect electric cooperatives across 84 of the state's 95 counties.



Chris A. Davis

"I am honored to serve an organization with such an important mission," Davis says. "For 83 years, TECA and member cooperatives have provided an essential service to rural and suburban communities, including my home in Middle Tennessee."

Electric cooperatives serve more than 3 million consumers and 72% of Tennessee. The Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association provides leadership, advocacy and support for the association's 25 electric cooperatives and publishes *The Tennessee Magazine*, the state's most widely circulated monthly periodical. Visit tnelectric.org or tnmagazine.org to learn more.

Project Help: Neighbors helping neighbors

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, in partnership with local energy assistance agencies, offers Project Help, a program designed to support individuals facing challenges in paying their utility bills.

Through this initiative, participating members can contribute \$1 or more each month to assist elderly, disabled or economically disadvantaged individuals in their communities. Every dollar donated to Project Help goes directly to local energy assistance agencies, which manage the distribution of funds to those in need. The program is entirely voluntary, allowing members to make a meaningful difference by simply adding a small contribution to their monthly electric bill.

To participate in Project Help, mark the designated box on your bill stub and complete the Project Help section on the back of your bill, or call CEMC at 800-987-2362.

Your \$1 monthly donation can provide much-needed relief to those struggling with utility expenses.

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Many older homes have less insulation than newer homes, but even newer homes can benefit from additional insulation. While it's not the least expensive efficiency improvement, adding insulation and air sealing your home can provide the biggest bang for your buck in energy savings and overall comfort.

The most common areas to insulate are attics, ceilings, crawlspaces or unconditioned basements, exterior and interior walls, floors and ductwork located in unconditioned spaces.

The amount and effectiveness rating of insulation required for each area varies by climate, but many websites like The Department of Energy or Home Depot provide easy-to-follow recommendations. Visit energy.gov/insulation to learn about recommended R-values for specific areas of the home based on climate zones.

It's important to understand how insulation effectiveness is measured. Insulation is rated in R-value, which measures the material's resistance to conductive heat flow. The higher the R-value, the greater the insulating effectiveness. The R-value you'll need depends on factors like climate, type of heating and cooling system and which area of the home you plan to insulate.



Insulation is offered in a wide range of materials from bulky fiberglass rolls to cellulose materials made from recycled paper products. If you're considering installing additional insulation, talk to an energy expert at Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation who can offer guidance on the right materials for your budget, climate and comfort needs. And be sure to visit EnergyRight.com/Rebates to explore potential rebates for insulation, making your energy-efficiency upgrades even more affordable.

Investing in proper insulation for your home not only enhances comfort but also reduces energy consumption.

Say goodbye to winter energy hogs

As February winter weather sets in, now is the time to confront your winter energy hogs and show them the door. Look for these common winter culprits throughout your house:

- **Dirty air filters.** Dirty filters make your system work harder to heat the air. Aim to change the filter every three to six months.
- **Leaky ducts.** A contractor can test your ducts for leakage and repair any problems. Repair visible or accessible leaks with metal tape — not duct tape!
- **Drafty doors and windows.** An easy fix with a big payback is weather stripping. Caulk or apply weather stripping around all window and door seams, especially those leading to the basement or the attic. Weather strip your attic access door.
- **Chilly water heater.** If your water heater is older or not well insulated, wrap it in an insulating jacket.
- **Wood fireplace.** Traditional fireplaces pull heated air out of the house. When not in use, check that the damper is completely closed.

Winter storm electrical safety

While winter weather can be beautiful to behold, fun to play in and fun for kids who get a day off from school, it can lead to the threat of ice and, ultimately, electrical hazards. As you keep an eye on the weather forecast, here are some tips to be mindful of to keep you and your family safe this winter.

Regularly check trees. Heavy snow and ice can bring trees and branches down onto power lines, which could lead to power outages during extremely cold temperatures. Do a regular check of trees around your property, and if you identify any that could pose an electrical hazard, contact Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation at 800-987-2362 for guidance.

Inspect space heaters. Likely, when you pull the space heater back out of the closet or garage, it will need to be cleaned and checked. Inspect for cracked or broken plugs or loose connections before each use. If the cord is frayed or damaged, do not use the heater.

Use portable generators safely. Do not operate a portable generator in your home, basement or garage. Generators can quickly produce high levels of carbon monoxide, which can result in death. Fans or open windows won't provide enough fresh air to keep you safe.

Beware of downed power lines. Call 911 and CEMC immediately. Always assume downed power lines are energized. Stay away from the lines and any nearby objects that might be touching the lines like a fence or tree limb. Do not attempt to move a downed power line.

Stay in your vehicle. If you must get out in a winter storm, use the utmost caution. If you lose control of your vehicle and hit a power pole, stay in your car, unless it is on fire. Getting out of your car puts you at risk for shock. If you must get out, do not touch your vehicle and the ground at the same time. Jump with your feet together and hop away. The Electrical Safety Authority recommends staying back the length of a school bus from the downed power line.



FIBER IS HERE!

Cumberland Connect completes its fiber network



Our Fiber Status Map as of December 2024. Check service availability online at [CumberlandConnect.org/Status-Map](https://www.CumberlandConnect.org/Status-Map).

A major milestone

Cumberland Connect is proud to announce the completion of our fiber network buildout across our five-county service territory! All eligible CEMC members now have access to fast, reliable and affordable fiber internet service. This achievement marks a significant milestone in our mission to connect and support the local communities we serve, fostering growth, opportunity and connection for all.

Since the start of this ambitious project in November 2019, we have constructed an incredible 5,291 miles of fiber optic line, enabling more than 109,000 homes and businesses to access our CCFiber internet services. The journey began with the opening of our first service zone in May 2020 in Stewart County, and now, four years later, we've completed a network that connects our entire service area.

Today, over 38,600 members are actively subscribed to Cumberland Connect's internet services. These connections represent not only the culmination of years of hard work but also the fulfillment of our commitment to delivering state-of-the-art connectivity to rural communities that have long needed access to reliable internet.

Reflecting on our journey, we're reminded of the countless milestones that have brought us to this point. From the beginning, Cumberland Connect has prioritized our members, designing this network to meet your needs today and for generations to come. Our team worked tirelessly to expand access throughout our service territory, reflecting our commitment to putting our members first.

Completing this project would not have been possible without the unwavering support and encouragement of our members. Together, we've not only enhanced connectivity but also made significant investments in our local communities, from supporting schools and community organizations to boosting economic development.

As we celebrate this achievement, we also look forward to the future. Cumberland Connect remains dedicated to providing the highest quality service and exploring new ways to enhance the online experiences of our members. This milestone is not the end of our journey — it's the foundation for even more growth ahead.

Thank you to all our members, subscribers, employees and partners for making this milestone possible. Your support fuels everything we do, and we are honored to serve you. Together, we've accomplished something truly remarkable, and we're excited for what lies ahead.

Learn more and check service availability at

www.CumberlandConnect.org

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

WHERE ARE WE
TODAY?



5,291

MILES OF FIBER CONSTRUCTED



109,000+

HOMES & BUSINESSES
WITH CCFIBER SERVICE ACCESS



38,600+

CCFIBER SUBSCRIBERS
AS OF DECEMBER 2024



Fireplace efficiency: Maximize warmth and minimize waste



If your two- and four-legged family members enjoy curling up in front of the fire, be sure to lock in comfort and savings by efficiently operating the fireplace in your home. Photograph by Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources

Q: I heard fireplaces can make your home colder. How do I keep my home comfortable while enjoying cozy fires?

A: When I was a little girl growing up in North Carolina, I remember my dad telling me that some nights were too cold to have a fire. That always seemed crazy to me, but like many other things he said, he was right.

A heat pump heated our home. We had an open fireplace that was more suited for ambience than creating heat. When you have a fire, warm air rises and draws the smoke out through the chimney. This also draws the warm air out of the house. This invisible force is called the stack effect.

The impact is exacerbated in drafty homes. When the warm air escapes through the chimney, it is replaced by cool air leaking in through gaps and cracks in the home. The greater the difference between the indoor and outdoor

temperatures, the greater the stack effect, hence Dad's rule of no fires on the coldest nights.

Wood fireplaces are not an efficient option for heating your home. Most of the heat goes out of the chimney. If you enjoy the comforting ambience and curling up in front of the fireplace during the colder months, here are some tips to efficiently operate a fireplace in your home:

Because it is out of sight, it can be easy to forget to close the chimney damper. The damper should be open when you have a fire going or when any hot ashes are in the fireplace to ensure smoke and carbon monoxide don't come into your home. Once the fire and all ashes are fully extinguished, close the damper. Leaving the damper open allows warm air to escape, wasting energy. It's like leaving a window open when your heating system is turned on in the winter.

If your damper doesn't close properly or your chimney doesn't have one, purchase a product designed for the

task. There are a variety of chimney plug sizes and styles available, including inflatable options designed to fit snugly in place. While you are at the hardware store, pick up some caulking and weather stripping to seal air leaks around windows, doors and pipes along exterior walls.

Fireplaces with gas logs are required to be installed with a mechanism that always keeps the damper open. This safety feature allows gases from the pilot light to escape. Glass doors can reduce the impact of air leakage in the winter and summer months. Consider installing glass doors on open fireplaces and keep them closed to minimize drafts.

Sealed combustion gas fireplaces are fully enclosed systems that draw the air needed for combustion from the outside. When properly installed, you get the benefit of the warmth of the fire without the worry of heat loss from drafts. If you have gas logs and enjoy the ease of a gas fireplace, consider upgrading to a sealed combustion unit.

Turning the pilot light off in the summer can reduce wasted gas. If you plan to turn the pilot light off, follow the instructions in the owner's manual to avoid any potential safety issues.

Woodstoves and pellet stoves are additional options that provide more heat than wood or gas fireplaces. Federal tax credits are available for high-efficiency biomass stoves. A credit of 30% of the project cost — including the cost of installation up to a maximum of \$2,000 — is available for products purchased and installed between Jan. 1, 2023, and Dec. 31, 2032. The unit must have a thermal efficiency rating of 75% or

If your damper doesn't close properly or your chimney doesn't have one, buy a chimney plug to keep cold air from entering and warm air from escaping your home. Photograph by Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources



more. Visit energystar.gov for more information.

If you have a woodstove, fireplace or any fuel-burning appliance in your home, be sure to install and maintain smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that can be harmful or even deadly if not detected.

Use my dad's sage advice and these tips to keep your home warm while gathering your loved ones around a glowing fire during the winter season. ■

Below, high-efficiency woodstoves can lower your heating costs and are eligible for federal tax credits. Photograph by Miranda Boutelle, Pioneer Utility Resources



Miranda Boutelle is vice president of operations and customer engagement at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy efficiency company. She also writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.





*Tammy Stover Phillips
of Monterey survived breast
cancer and now finds joy in
the gift of tatting*

Story and Photographs by Amber Weaver



When Tammy Stover Phillips sat down with her 97-year-old neighbor to learn the art of tatting, she didn't know then the impact the art would have on not only herself but nearly 2,000 people across the world in just a span of five years.

"To give is a great blessing, to pray for others is a greater blessing and the best blessing is when people say, 'I think of you when I see your prayer circle, and I pray for you,'" Phillips said.

Blessed with angels

Phillips has been married to her husband, Keith, who is on the board of directors for Volunteer Energy Cooperative, for 36 years. They have built their life in Monterey and have two daughters and two grandsons. Together, the couple owns and operates D.M. Goff Funeral Home Inc.

"We work as a team and enjoy serving our families," Phillips said. "We're just blessed with so many people who love us and consider us family as we do in return."

Those people, along with many new "angels," as Phillips calls them, became key in her life when she was diagnosed with cancer in 2020.

How the circles came to be

Phillips found a knot in October 2019 and pointed it out during a regularly scheduled mammogram, but the results came back clear. Still worried about the situation, she pointed it out to her gynecologist the next month. At first that doctor agreed all was well, but after measuring and checking back in after three months, an ultrasound determined she had cancer. A biopsy confirmed it was Stage 3 breast cancer and that she would have to go through chemotherapy.

Right, Tammy Stover Phillips poses with a prayer circle she is making to start her day. She will add the completed circle to her collection she always has on hand. Opposite page, a close-up shows intricate loops of a beautiful piece of her tatting.

After the initial shock and lots of time spent in prayer and scripture, one of Phillips' daughters assured her how she was going to reach so many new people through this process.

"Well, you know it! I have to be thinking about what I'm going to give everybody," Phillips responded. "Now, where did that come from, and why did I have that thought? I guess God was already starting to work with me."

That thought is what spurred the idea of her prayer circles.

Tatting is an old-fashioned handcraft that creates lace-like fabric using thread and a small shuttle to tie knots and loops. It is becoming a lost art.

Everywhere she goes

Phillips' prayer circles are created through needle tatting. It's an old-fashioned handcraft that is essentially knotting and is becoming a lost art.

Tatting involves creating lace-like fabric using thread and a small shuttle or needle to tie knots and loops.

"It's formed on a needle, and then I make rings and chains," Phillips said. "The little loops on the prayer circle are called picots."

It takes Phillips about 25 minutes to create these prayer circles. She starts every day by making two to add to her collection that is always with her.

"I carry my tatting everywhere I go," Phillips said. "I have it with me wherever I am in case I have the time to make one or have the opportunity to share one."

Giving and lifting up in prayer

After her diagnosis, Phillips decided who she considered to be her most special people — her husband, children, grandchildren and mother — needed to have their own prayer circles during what she knew would be a difficult road ahead for all of them. Then, she wanted to gift them to the people she encountered through the process.

"We would take those around town and ask people to lift me in prayer and remember me while I was going through my chemo," Phillips said.



She even made sure she had colors available that matched the cancer ribbon color for the other patients she would see — for instance, pink for other breast cancer patients and yellow for those facing bone cancer. Now, she tats in approximately 35 different colors.

Not long after the prayer circle project began, though, Phillips wanted something to change.

“As I was giving them out and asking people to pray for me, I had the feeling come up on me that I was being selfish,” Phillips said. “That’s when I decided I was going to turn it so that it’s for everyone in the circle of need and hurt because we’re all in that circle.”

On top of handing out the prayer circles, Phillips began physically writing down the names of who she gifted them to in a pink notebook. She would then lift those names up in prayer.



Through deep waters

The prayer circles have led Phillips through many times of need and ultimately taught her some valuable lessons. She has kept the prayer circles that are tied directly to those milestones — like the one she was making when she was understandably upset about what she was going through.

“I was screaming to God,” Phillips recalled in regret. “God, how can you not answer me the way I want you with all these prayer circles I have passed out? How can you not answer me the way I want you to?”

Another circle she kept is from a time right before she was heading to yet another doctor’s appointment. The thread had a knot in it. Phillips could have worked the knot back out, but instead she had a realization that she shared with her husband, and that circle is hanging in her home to this day.





Above, Phillips gives a closer look at the making of a prayer circle. Below, several finished prayer circles are ready to find their new homes. Opposite page, top, Phillips keeps in her home a prayer circle she made after coming to the realization that life, much like the thread she was using, isn't perfect. Opposite page, bottom, Phillips has made an array of tatting pieces over the years.

"God is showing me here that life is not perfect," Phillips said. "I felt like God was speaking to me in that moment."

One more circle Phillips decided to keep is tied to scripture. She always starts her day by reading her Bible. On that specific day, she was reading Isaiah 43, and her doctor called her with the good news that all the cancer had been removed.

"I sat and cried for almost an hour before I could even call my husband to give him the good news," Phillips said. "This is a verse I hold close to my heart because I know God was with me through the deep waters and the fire of oppression."

Prayer circles around the world

Phillips ended chemotherapy in June 2021 and has since been cancer free. Throughout the time since her diagnosis, she has handed out nearly 2,000 prayer circles, meaning she prays for some 2,000 people regularly. While many are in her local area, some have made it around the world.

"God gave me the desire to keep a list, and I have it in a pink notebook all typed and numbered of each recipient," Phillips said. "I have been blessed to share with people who live in over 40 different states and several other countries, including England, Iceland, Ireland, Belize and the Philippines."

Just when she was feeling on her heart that maybe her ministry was complete, a friend of Phillips' best friend was about to begin chemotherapy and reached out to Phillips after receiving a prayer circle. The friend said it was the most precious gift she had ever received.

"I knew that was God telling me then that I was not done with this," Phillips said. "I pray God blesses me to

continue to give my prayer circles and that my numbers given will grow exceedingly."

As she continues tatting through her life, Phillips hopes to one day have a prayer circle in all 50 states. When her time does come, though, she wants these prayer circles to be something she is remembered by.

"I want my family to display my list at my funeral as one of the important memories of my life," Phillips said.

That way, the nearly 2,000 names can know that they, too, were prayed for during their time of hurt and need.



The Show That Made Country Music Famous

*Opry 100 celebrates the past, present
and future of the Grand Ole Opry*

Story by Amber Weaver • Photographs courtesy of the Grand Ole Opry



On Nov. 28, 1925, a prominent radio announcer and a 77-year-old fiddle player went live on the “WSM Barn Dance” — debuting the show that would soon make country music famous.

“People were tuned in that Saturday night and wrote in, saying, ‘That’s the kind of music we hunger for. Keep it up,’” said Dan Rogers, senior vice president and executive producer at the Grand Ole Opry. “Truly from that point forward, that was what would become the Grand Ole Opry.”

How the Opry came to be

A month before that show, the National Life and Accident Insurance Company decided to launch its own radio station. It was the still-well-known WSM radio, named for the company’s slogan, “We Shield Millions.” Initially it was an effort to sell more insurance, but soon



Radio announcer George D. Hay stands at the microphone, and Uncle Jimmy Thompson sits with his fiddle for the first show of “WSM Barn Dance” in 1925.

it became much more.

The company built a small studio with a window in its downtown Nashville office, and the station went live for the first time on Oct. 5, 1925. Its most famous show, “WSM Barn Dance,” which was soon renamed the “Grand Ole Opry,” kicked off that November night with George D. Hay and Uncle Jimmy Thompson.

Stewarding the Opry

While Rogers was obviously not there 100 years ago when this story began, he’s had quite the hand in the journey over the past two decades.

“I have been a Grand Ole Opry fan all my life,” Rogers shared.

Many might make the same claim, but Rogers has truly lived this statement. When he was in kindergarten, his parents left their hometown of Xenia, Illinois, and brought him to Music City for his very first Opry show.



Singer and songwriter Taylor Swift performs on the Opry stage on April 7, 2007. Opposite page, the inside of the famed Opry House auditorium is still before welcoming thousands of guests for a show.



Above left, stars crowd the stage at the grand opening of the Grand Ole Opry House in 1974. Above right, the Opry House celebrates its 50th anniversary on March 16, 2024.

"I remember Dolly Parton being on that night," Rogers recalled.

The Rogers family made several trips back to the Opry House throughout his childhood, and when he couldn't make it in person, he would tune in to 650 AM every chance he had.

"I had the Opry on a huge pedestal," Rogers said. "I still do today."

Rogers moved to Nashville in 1998 for the start of his career with the Opry as an intern. Since then, he has held several positions in marketing, communications and strategic partnerships.

"Today, I help steward the Opry toward its future," Rogers said. "We try to make every show the very best it can be with nods to the past, present and future of country music, and while we're doing that night after night, we hope to be building upon this incredible legacy that has become the Grand Ole Opry."

As the red curtain goes up

The legacy of the show and how it has changed would amaze any country music fan.

"It's almost unrecognizable from 1925, but then at its heart it remains the show that, fortunately, people around the world want to play and the show that people around the world want to visit and tune in to," Rogers said.

One of the many changes for the show is its location. The National Life Company's downtown office was soon filled with fans trying to watch the show. That ultimately led to the move to the Hillsboro Theater in October 1934. Performances were also held at the Dixie Tabernacle and War Memorial Auditorium. Popularity of the Opry really took off when the show moved to the Ryman Auditorium in June 1943. Shows were put on there through March 1974 — and some still are today — before moving to the Grand

Ole Opry House. Now, 4,400 people can enjoy Nashville's ultimate live music experience.

One of the biggest changes for the Opry, though, has been how the audience can enjoy that experience. What was once a program broadcast on a small radio station is now available on Sirius XM satellite radio. You can even watch the show on Opry's Facebook page and YouTube channel and via Circle Country digital streaming partners.

"Today someone can be listening on their phone in South Africa, Iceland and Iowa, but in terms of things staying the same, you could also be tuned into the very device that your great-, great-, great-grandmother was listening to and still pick up that signal today on WSM radio," Rogers said.

No matter how fans tune in, though, the same country music genre the world has come to love is still being played every time the big red curtain goes up.

"You're still going to hear a great fiddle tune and the sounds of square dancers on the stage, but you're also going to hear songs that have just been released, but those



Rapper turned country music artist Post Malone makes his Opry debut on Aug. 14, 2024.

are right beside songs that very well could have been played on the early days of the Grand Ole Opry,” Rogers explained.

Opry 100

Over 100 years, the Opry has become country music’s biggest stage, meaning a celebration is in store.

“Every show will include things that help propel us into our next century while also taking a look back and celebrating the great people that have walked through these doors and have sung on our stages for 100 years now,” Rogers said.

More than 230 shows are already on the calendar for Opry 100, and the performances are going to be more memorable than ever. Opry 100 will be included in every show and began with Bill Anderson, the longest-serving member in Opry history, taking the stage in January to kickstart the anniversary.

“Opry 100 Honors” shows will be hosted throughout the year to salute iconic artists who have helped make the show what it is today, including Roy Acuff, Johnny and June Carter Cash, Patsy Cline, Charlie Daniels, George Jones and more. As the Opry looks to the next century, 100 Opry debuts will be made this year, too, with the first of the year being Shaboozey. The Opry will also be naming country music’s 100 all-time greatest songs, chosen by none other than the fans. Those songs will be showcased throughout shows this year.

Another highlight for the anniversary will be the first time the Opry goes international. At a time where country music is growing in global popularity, the show will stage a performance outside the United States this fall from the renowned Royal Albert Hall in London.

Also, this fall, the Opry will celebrate its birthday all throughout October. For decades, the Opry has marked its birthday with a special weekend in October. This year, every show in the month will be a birthday party in the Opry House lobby with a larger-than-life birthday cake on the Opry stage.

The Opry will also celebrate in a big way on its exact anniversary.

“Nov. 28 will be the exact 100-year anniversary since the first time Uncle Jimmy Thompson sat down with his fiddle and played ‘Tennessee Wagoner’ on what would become the Grand Ole Opry,” Rogers said.

This special show will take a walk down memory lane, beginning with that first performance and building toward a look to the Opry’s next century.

Aside from performances, there will also be merchandise available for purchase to commemorate the anniversary, including the first-ever book that will feature every Opry member and their contributions to country music’s most revered stage. “100 Years of Grand Ole Opry” by Craig Shelburne will be available this April. Other apparel, home goods and even an Opry-themed children’s book are also available for purchase.



Country music artists Brad Paisley and Little Jimmy Dickens return the Circle to the Opry stage after the 2010 Nashville floods.

‘Will the Circle Be Unbroken’

As celebrations this year reflect over the past century and point forward to the next, one thing for certain is that the circle will be unbroken.

“I am looking forward to opening the door to the next 100 years,” Rogers said. “I know I won’t be here to celebrate all those 100 years, but I’m looking forward to all of us who work at the Opry, all the fans of the Opry and the artists of the Opry coming together to celebrate the past but linking arms and forging this great path to the future.” ■

Visit the Opry!

Grand Ole Opry House, 600 Opry Mills Drive •
Ryman Auditorium, 116 Rep. John Lewis
Way North

For more information:

opry.com
615-871-6779





From Scarred to Scenic

Indian Mountain State Park offers beauty on once ravaged land

Story by Trish Milburn • Photographs courtesy of Indian Mountain State Park

The word “unique” is often overused, but it’s an apt description for Indian Mountain State Park in Jellico. The park, located at the base of Indian Mountain close to the border with Kentucky, truly has a unique history. It’s the first and only example in the Tennessee State Parks system of reclaiming an abandoned strip mine to develop into recreational opportunities for visitors to enjoy.

In fact, if you visit its more than 200 acres today, imagining it as an ugly scar on the landscape is difficult. Instead, you’ll see hiking trails, lakes, ponds, picnic areas, campsites and lovely views.

But in the 1940s and 1950s, the area looked much different as it was surface mined for the area’s high-quality Jellico coal. The mine ceased operation in the area that would become the park when the bed of coal was depleted. The city of Jellico became owner of the abandoned mine in 1960 and began the process of reclaiming the land with the help of grants from the state, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency and the Appalachian Regional Commission.

After a decade of work to bring the area back to life, Indian Mountain State Park opened in 1971.

On and around the water

Elk Creek runs through the middle of the park, dividing it into two halves. Each has a prominent lake — the 6-acre Indian Mountain Lake in the western half and Ballard Lake, which is actually a large pond, in the eastern half.

Personal canoes and kayaks can be used on Indian Mountain Lake, and during the summer months you can rent a kayak, paddleboard or pedal boat to while away a warm day.

Fishing for bluegill, catfish and bass is also available for those who find relaxation trying their luck with a fishing pole.

The areas in and around the lakes, creek and flooded former strip pits can also be rewarding for birders. Nesting boxes for tree swallows and bluebirds are placed around the lake, so keep your eyes open for flashes of blue from these songbirds.

Take to the trails

Four hiking trails, ranging from half a mile to a mile in length, are rated either easy or moderate. All are natural

surface trails except the 1-mile Indian Mountain Lake Trail, which is paved.

“Tennessee State Parks has prioritized making our parks accessible for everyone,” says Leighann Perkins, the park’s administrative assistant and the employee who has been with the park the longest. “Our park is proud to offer an all-terrain wheelchair, free of cost, to anyone who needs it, making all of our trails accessible to everyone.”

A fifth trail is scheduled to be open by June.

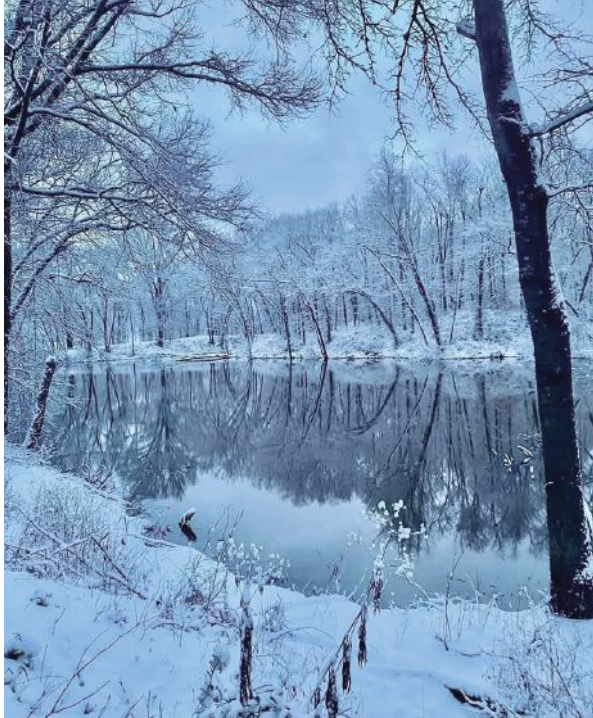
Let’s go camping

The park is a popular destination for campers because the campsites are open year-round. The main campground has 47 fully equipped sites for tents and RV campers. Here you’ll find the other thing that makes Indian Mountain unique among Tennessee State Parks: It’s the only state park to produce solar power from the solar panels, which are on the bath house at the campground, and sell the electricity back to the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The Rabbit Road Campground offers 10 primitive, hike-in tent sites. There are no water or electric hookups. While there is a bath house in the campground’s parking lot, it is only open seasonally, even though this campground is open year-round.

The name of the primitive campground actually has a personal tie to Perkins.

“As a child growing up next door to the park, my mom would take me for walks along a trail that was connected to the park,” Perkins says. “It was park property, but the trail was seldom used by visitors and was eventually closed. Some of my best childhood memories were made along that trail. One thing that always stood out was the enormous number of rabbits we never failed to see. Because of this, my family always referred to the trail as Rabbit Road. Then in 2020, the trail was reopened for primitive camping. There were 10



campsites with each located on top of a spoil pile created from the previous strip mining. By this time, I was an employee at Indian Mountain, and it was time to finally give the trail a name. I told this story to the park manager at the time, and the name then officially became Rabbit Road.”

Other offerings

The park has three picnic shelters that can accommodate 50 to 75 people, depending on the shelter. These shelters, with tables and grills and access to restrooms, can be reserved up to a year in advance.

Are you a fan of playing disc golf, or do you want to give it a try? You’re in luck. The park is home to an 18-hole course.

If you need a snack, firewood for your campsite or a souvenir to take home, be sure to visit the camp store. Note that the store is only open seasonally during the warmer months.

In addition to regular ranger programs, the park hosts several special events throughout the year. Among these are a community Easter egg hunt, the Vaitor Davis Memorial Fishing Rodeo, the Miner’s Mile (run/walk race event), Battle at the Border Disc Golf Tournament and Halloween in the Park.

While Perkins has a long history with Indian Mountain, Park Manager Nick Shultz is not only pretty new to his position but also to Tennessee State Parks overall.

“I have been the manager at Indian Mountain State Park for all of two months,” he said in late December. “In October, I was given the opportunity to join the incredible team at Tennessee State Parks and made the move from Wisconsin, where I spent the last 12 years working at a private campground. In my short time here, my favorite part of the job has been the conversations I’ve been able to have with park visitors. Whether it’s someone just passing through, visiting from a different part of Tennessee, or someone local providing me a history lesson on the park or surrounding community of Jellico, those conversations truly make this a rewarding job.”

Indian Mountain State Park

For more information, visit tnstateparks.com/parks/indian-mountain or call the park office at 423-566-5870.



Find the Tennessee flag



We have hidden somewhere in this magazine the icon from the Tennessee flag like the one pictured here. It could be larger or smaller than this, and it could be in black and white or any color. If you find it, send us a postcard or email us with the page number where it's located. Include your name, mailing address, phone number, email address and electric cooperative. One entry per person. Three winners will be chosen from a random drawing, and each will receive \$20.

Note that the icon we hide will not be on an actual flag or historical marker, will not appear on pages 20-25 and will not be placed in any ads. This month's flag will not appear on this page (that would just be too easy).

Good luck!

Send **postcards only** (no phone calls, please) to: *The Tennessee Magazine*, Find the Flag, P.O. Box 100912, Nashville, TN 37224. Or you can fill out the form at

tnmagazine.org or email flag@tnelectric.org. Entries must be postmarked or received via email by Saturday, March 1. Winners will be published in the April issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*.

December Flag Spotters

Thanks for the postcards and emails again this month identifying the correct location of the flag, which was found in the "o" of the word "Point" on **page 36**.

Winners are drawn randomly from each month's entries.

December's lucky flag spotters are:

Daniel Everitt, Selmer, Pickwick EC

Mack Parks, Fayetteville, Fayetteville Public Utilities

Jene Coy, Ooltewah, Volunteer EC



Artist's Palette

Assignment for April

Three age categories: 8 and younger, 9 to 13 and 14 to 18 years old. Each group will have first-, second- and third-place winners.

Media: Drawing or painting on **8½-by-11-inch unlined** paper, canvas or board. We encourage the use of color.

Please follow these size guidelines. Oversized canvas entries are especially difficult to handle and cannot be returned. Framed pieces will not be accepted.

Entry: Send your original art to: *The Tennessee Magazine*, Artist's Palette — **April**, P.O. Box 100912, Nashville, TN 37224. (Please make sure you include the month on the outside of the envelope!) Only one entry per artist, please.

Deadline: Art must be postmarked by Saturday, March 1.

Include: Your name (*legibly, please!*), age, mailing address, phone number, email address and electric cooperative. Leaving anything out will result in disqualification.

Please note: By entering, you give *The Tennessee Magazine* permission to publish your work in print, online and via social media.

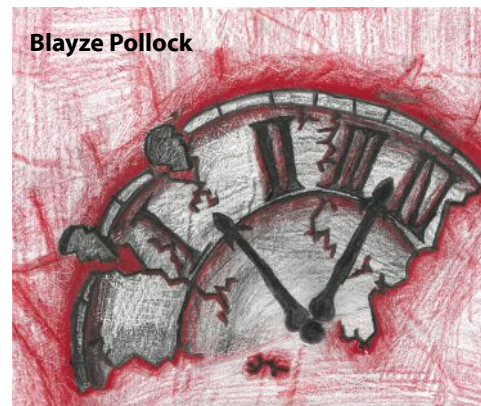
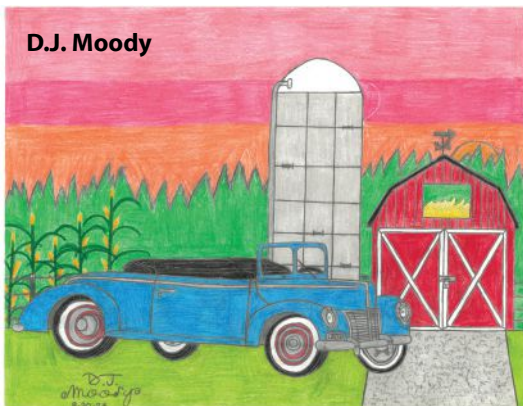
Artwork will not be returned **unless** you include a self-addressed, **stamped** envelope (SASE) with your submission. **Only the U.S. Postal Service** will be used for returns. *For best reproduction results, do not fold artwork.*

Each entry needs its own SASE, please. Siblings must enter separately with their own envelopes. **Attention,**

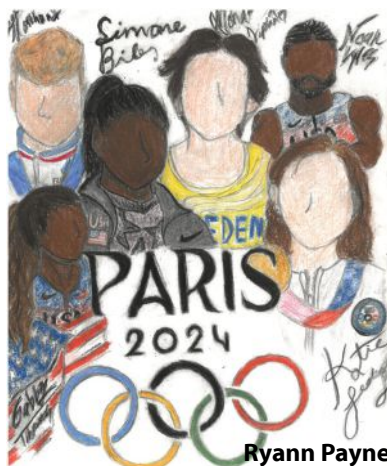
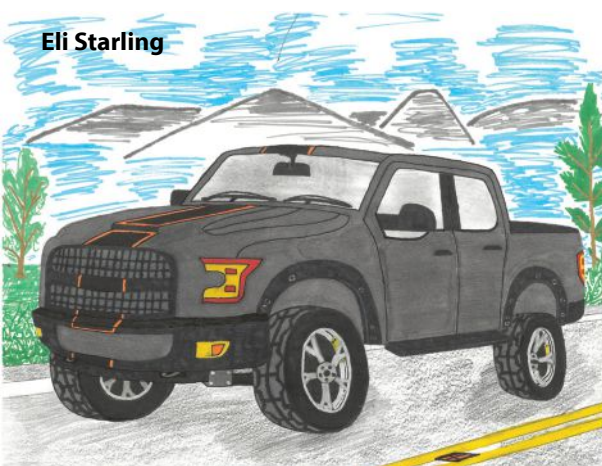
teachers: You may send multiple entries in one envelope along with one SASE with sufficient postage.

Winners will be published in the April issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*. First place wins \$50, second place wins \$30 and third place wins \$20. Winners are eligible to enter again after three months. Winners will receive their awards, artwork and certificates of placement within six to eight weeks of publication.

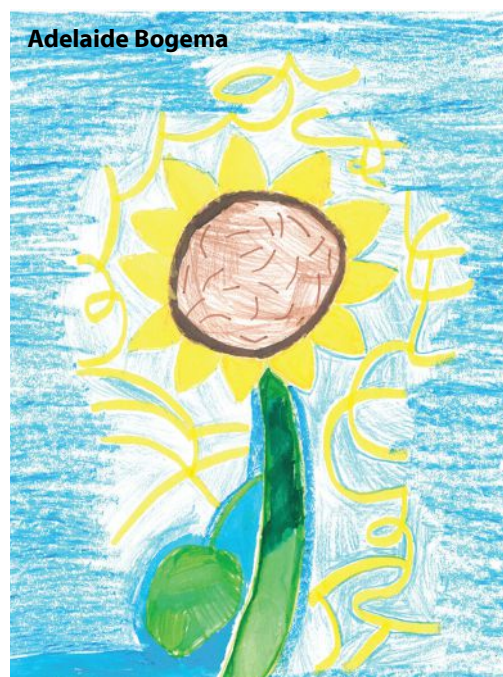
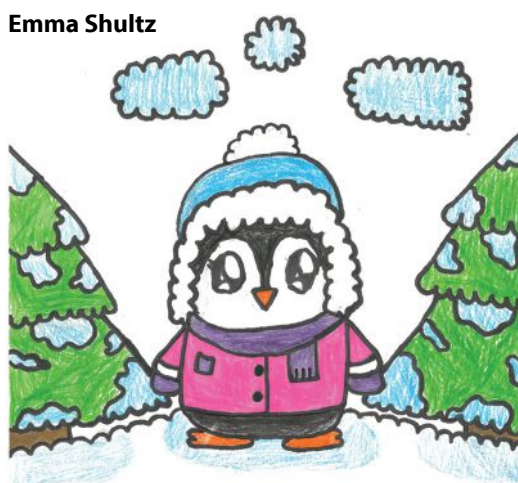
Artist's Palette *February* Winners



WINNERS, 14-18 AGE GROUP: **First place:** D.J. Moody, age 17, Sequachee Valley EC; **Second place:** Kaleigh Phillips, age 16, Duck River EMC; **Third place:** Blayze Pollock, age 16, Forked Deer EC



WINNERS, 9-13 AGE GROUP: **First place:** Eli Starling, age 12, Upper Cumberland EMC; **Second place:** Ryann Payne, age 13, Middle Tennessee Electric; **Third place:** Edison Lenser, age 10, Middle Tennessee Electric



WINNERS, 8 AND YOUNGER AGE GROUP: **First place:** Emma Shultz, age 8, Holston EC; **Second place:** Adelaide Bogema, age 8, Middle Tennessee Electric; **Third place:** Natalie Kramer, age 6, Middle Tennessee Electric

HAT TRICKS

A glass dessert dish, resembling a coupe glass, is filled with scoops of white ice cream topped with a thick, golden-brown caramel sauce. A square shortbread cookie is perched on top of the ice cream. A silver spoon is stuck into the ice cream. The dish sits on a matching glass saucer with a scalloped edge. Two more shortbread cookies are on the saucer. The entire scene is set against a deep blue background with a subtle, wavy pattern.

A tip of the hat to recipes that are easy to master and guaranteed to impress.

No-Churn Fruit Ice Cream, Caramel Sauce and Shortbread

Recipes by Tammy Algood

Food styling by Cynthia Kent

Photographs by Robin Conover

What does it take to come off like an expert home cook? It's not expensive ingredients or complicated recipes. Instead, great cooks have a number of simple recipes they can pull off with ease from ingredients we all keep in our kitchens. And ... voila! Here they are. Like magic.

Roasted Potatoes

Yield: 6-8 servings

1½ teaspoons salt, divided

4 large russet potatoes, peeled and cut into large 2-inch chunks

2 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil

½ teaspoon black pepper

1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

Place a large saucepan filled at least halfway with water over high heat. Add 1 teaspoon of the salt and bring to a boil. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 450 degrees.

Carefully add the potatoes to the boiling water. When the water returns to a boil, reduce the heat to simmer and cook the potatoes for 10 minutes.

Drain and allow rest 30 seconds in the colander. Transfer to a large bowl and drizzle with the oil. Cover and shake the bowl a couple of times to rough up the potatoes. Transfer to a large rimmed baking sheet that has been coated with cooking spray. Spread in a single layer and sprinkle evenly with the remaining salt and pepper.

Roast 20 minutes, then remove and, using a spatula, turn the potatoes. Return to the oven and roast another 30 minutes or until golden-brown.

Transfer to a serving bowl and sprinkle with the parsley. Add more salt if desired. Serve warm.

Brown Butter —
Excellent when drizzled over steamed vegetables or broiled meats, with baked potatoes, in pasta dishes, for dipping toasted bread or in



any recipe calling for melted butter.

Yield: ½ cup

½ cup unsalted butter,
room temperature and
cut into 8 pieces

Place the butter in a (light-colored on the inside) skillet over medium heat. Stir the butter with a wooden spoon as it melts and begins to foam. Keep stirring between 6 and 8 minutes until the butter turns golden-brown. Immediately remove from the heat and transfer to a heatproof bowl to cool or use immediately.

Caramelized Onions — *Top cream cheese or smear on toasted French bread for an appetizer. Add to a pizza, burger, hot dog, grilled cheese or just about any dip, soup, stew or casserole that calls for onions ... the possibilities are endless.*

Yield: 2-plus cups

2 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

2 large sweet onions, peeled and cut in half then thinly sliced

½ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon water

Place the oil and butter in a large skillet over medium heat. When the butter has melted, add the onions and stir to coat. Allow the onions to cook for 10 minutes, then give them a good stir with a spatula and add the salt and water.

Allow to cook 20 minutes undisturbed, then stir and reduce the heat to medium-low. Cook another 30

minutes, only stirring once halfway through. When the onions are deep golden-brown, turn off the heat and allow them to cool before using. Refrigerate or freeze leftovers.

No-Churn Fruit Ice Cream — *No ice cream maker? No*



problem! Use this recipe all year by substituting seasonal fresh fruits of your choice.

Yield: 8 servings

2 ripe bananas, peeled

1 (14-ounce) can

sweetened condensed milk

2 tablespoons bourbon, optional

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

2 cups heavy cream, chilled

Caramel Sauce (recipe follows)

Place the ripe bananas in a food processor and puree until smooth. Transfer to a large bowl and stir in the sweetened condensed milk, bourbon (if using) and extract. Set aside.

In the bowl of an electric mixer, beat the cream until stiff peaks form. Fold into the banana mixture, cover tightly and freeze for 6 to 8 hours or until firm. Serve with a drizzle of Caramel Sauce (recipe follows).

Caramel Sauce — *The oven does all the work, and it comes out perfect every time!*

Yield: 14 ounces

1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Pour the sweetened condensed milk in a pie pan and cover with aluminum foil. Place in a larger pan and put in the oven. With a tea kettle, fill the larger pan with water until ¾ full. Bake 60 to 75 minutes or until the color of the milk is golden-brown. Remove from the oven and cool in the pan for 10 minutes. Carefully remove from the water bath onto a wire rack to cool completely before using.

Cinnamon Sugar — *There are literally dozens of uses to spruce up loads of ordinary foods. Sprinkle on toasted buttered bread, oatmeal, yogurt, freshly baked muffins, sliced*



bananas, waffles, French toast, whipped cream, apple wedges or freshly brewed coffee.

Yield: ½ heaping cup
½ cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons ground cinnamon

In a small bowl, stir together the sugar and cinnamon until well blended. Transfer with a funnel to a half pint canning jar, cover tightly and store in a cool, dark, dry place until ready to use.

Shortbread — *This is the dessert that is always delicious, uses only three ingredients you likely have on hand and is super simple to make.*

It is my go-to recipe when I have unexpected company on the way.

Yield: 24 pieces
½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup unsalted butter, cold and cut in pieces
Caramel Sauce (see recipe)

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Grease an 8-inch square baking pan and set aside.

In a mixing bowl, stir together the sugar and flour. Cut the butter

into the mixture with a pastry cutter. Don't overwork the dough. Transfer to the prepared baking dish and mash evenly throughout the pan. It will be a little coarse looking. Bake 50 to 55 minutes or until lightly golden brown. Cool in the pan. Cut into small pieces when ready to serve and drizzle with Caramel Sauce.

Baked Brie with Fig Honey

Yield: 4 servings
1 French baguette, sliced
1 (8-ounce) wheel brie
¼ cup fig honey or raspberry preserves

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Place the baguette slices on an ungreased jellyroll pan and brown 5-7 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool. Place the brie in a lightly greased small cast iron skillet and bake 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and spoon the fig honey or preserves on top. Let rest 5 minutes before serving with the crostini.

Carbonara — *Once you master this incredible dish, you will own the dining room! It is all about timing, so assemble everything and work*

confidently! Serve alongside a fresh green salad and toasted French bread.

Yield: 2 to 3 servings
4 ounces spaghetti or another long pasta
¼ cup chopped pancetta or bacon
1 egg, room temperature
¼ cup grated Parmesan-Reggiano
2 teaspoons chopped fresh parsley
¼ teaspoon black pepper

Bring a large saucepan of water to a boil and add the pasta. Cook according to the package directions.

Meanwhile, place a large skillet over medium heat and add the pancetta or bacon. Cook 4 to 5 minutes or until it crisps and curls.

In a large bowl, lightly beat the egg. Add the cheese, parsley and pepper and mix well. Set aside.

Drain the pasta, reserving ½ cup of the cooking water. Add the drained pasta to the pancetta or bacon pan and toss to coat with the rendered grease. Transfer to the bowl and toss quickly, adding the reserved hot cooking water a tablespoon at a time. Continue to toss and add the water until the egg has cooked and the cheese has melted. Serve immediately. ■

Tammy Algood develops recipes for The Tennessee Magazine that feature farm-fresh Tennessee food. Those fresh, local ingredients will always add cleaner, more flavorful foods to your table. We recommend visiting local farms and farmers markets to find the freshest seasonal produce.



Email your cooking questions to
Tammy Algood: talgood@tnelectric.org.

Celeste asks: "Could you please tell me how to use a cheese I received in a gift basket called gormandis? It has a chopped pecan topping, and I have kept it refrigerated."

Celeste, This sounds like gourmandise cheese, and it is delicious with crackers. It has a mild taste that is slightly sweet thanks to flavoring from cherry juice. The

cheese is soft, which makes it easily spreadable.

Robert writes: "My grandmother used to make a potato side dish that almost looked like bread and was cut in wedges. It was delicious, and we had it with hamburger steak. I know that's not a lot of information, but does it sound familiar to you?"

Robert, I believe what you are referring to is an Irish potato bread called a boxty. The name comes from the Gaelic word meaning pan or griddle. It is shaped like a scone and cut into wedges before baking on a griddle. It is a mixture of raw shredded (or sometimes mashed) potatoes, along with all-purpose flour and leavening of either baking powder or baking soda. ■



"Mockingbird"

by Robin Conover, Canon EOS 5D Mark IV,
EF 100-400 mm at 400 mm, $f4-5.6$ L IS USM lens,
ISO 1000, $f5.6$ at 1/1000 second, handheld

Point *of* View

By Robin Conover

A winter walk in the woods is magical for me. Whether it's getting out to explore my yard, a local park or somewhere deep in the forest, the first fluffy blanket of snow always brings a noticeable crispness and quietness to the air.

Visibly, the snow transforms the landscape into the monochromatic palette of winter with shades of whites, grays and browns. Audibly, the quiet is only broken by my footsteps as I hear the snow compress beneath my hiking boots and the songs of birds as they flit about, foraging for seeds and berries left from the fall mast.

One of the most prolific songsters you will hear in Tennessee this time of year is our state bird — the mockingbird. You have undoubtedly heard a mockingbird soliloquy — either beautiful songs of its own or masterful imitations of countless other birds.

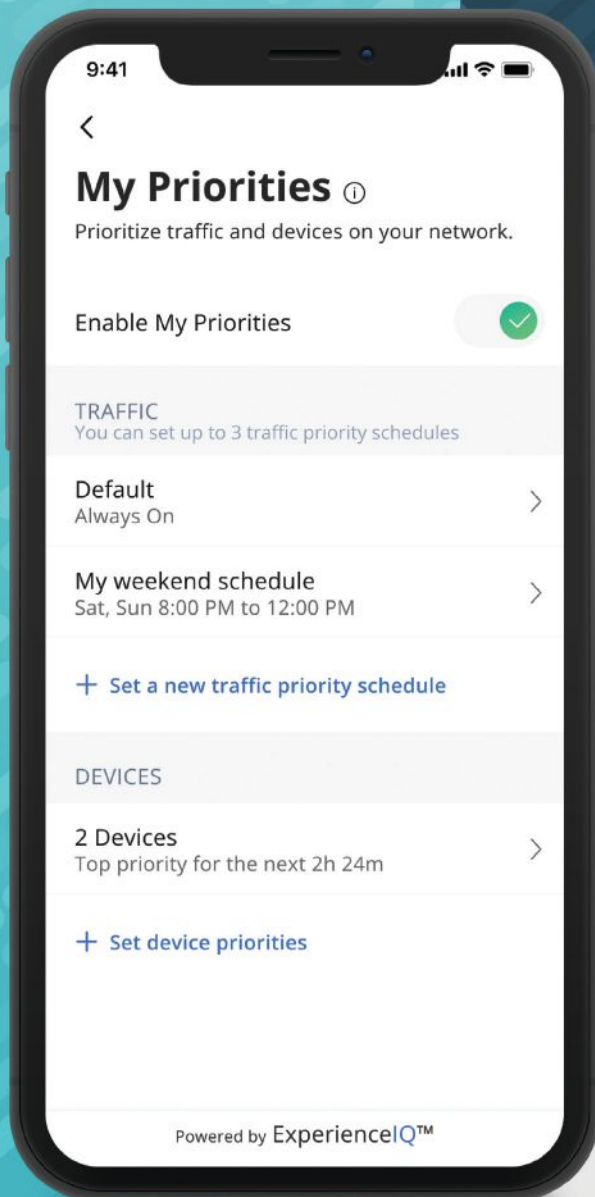
On an overcast, cold day, I observed this mockingbird for about 10 minutes as it specifically chose the red

berries from this shrub. I loved the simple background and subdued color of the scene with the red accents of the berries. Exposing for the low light, I chose a shutter speed fast enough to capture the bird sharply as it moved, an f -stop that would limit depth of field, thus blurring the background; and an ISO that wouldn't create too much noise in the image.

As I'm getting older, I'm finding simple things like birdwatching to be pleasant and rewarding pastimes. It's a perfect hobby for any age.

February brings an opportunity for birders of all ages and levels to participate in the national Great Backyard Bird Count. Organized by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the count will be held nationally Feb. 14-17.

To experience the great outdoors this winter, bundle up and get outside. To find out how to follow and participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count, visit birdcount.org. 🐦



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