



The "Cat-in-the-Bag" logo is the registered property of Bemis Company, Inc. and is used with permission. Bemis Historical Society is not directly affiliated with Bemis Company, Inc.

# THE BEMIS STORY

*A publication of Bemis Historical Society*

*Bemis . . . Where Industry and Friendliness Blend Into Progress*

*Bemis Mill Village Museum, 2 North Missouri Street, Jackson, Tennessee*

*Bemis Historical Society, PO Box 9266, Jackson, TN 38314-9266*

[www.bemishistory.org](http://www.bemishistory.org)

Spring 2020

## Bemis Heritage Days 2020

We celebrated our first Bemis Heritage Days event in 1998, and we have enjoyed twenty-two annual events. The Bemis Historical Society's Board has cancelled Bemis Heritage Days 2020 due to COVID-19. This was a difficult decision; but we can continue to keep in touch with our Bemis family and friends through the internet with our website and social media, phone calls, and texts.

Urgent appeal: Because of the cancellation of Bemis Heritage Days, we will lose the profit from the BBQ dinners and profit from memorabilia sales. The City of Jackson donates \$500 for our annual event, so we will also miss this donation. Members often pay their \$25 annual membership dues during Bemis Heritage Days.

Costs to operate and maintain the Bemis Museum will continue – insurance, alarms service, two phone lines required for alarms, sprinkler service, and utilities. Please send your dues NOW and please consider a little extra donation to help our budget. Thank you very much.

## In Memory of Richard Fisher

Richard Dean "Dick" Fisher was born on September 28, 1939, in Bemis, Tennessee, to William Benton and Acenah Mills Fisher. He was part of a close-knit family of 13 children. He was in the first graduating class of South Side High School in 1957, and he graduated from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville in 1965 with a BS degree in Business Administration. He excelled in baseball, football, and basketball. He was a United States veteran having served in the National Guard.

Richard founded Fisher Construction in Milan, TN in 1989. He was an active supporter in several community organizations. Richard was a vital part of the Bemis Historical Society as a charter member and contractor in the rehabilitation of the theater/warehouse into our present Bemis Museum. He served the Society as a board member and as former chairman.

Richard passed away December 9, 2019. He is survived by a loving family and many friends. Memories of Richard and his family are posted on the "Bemis Memories" page of our website.  
<https://bemishistory.org/society-member-memories/>

## Annual Membership Dues

Annual membership dues are \$25 for individual or family memberships. Please mail a check to:

Bemis Historical Society  
PO Box 9266  
Jackson, TN 38314-9266

## Cotton Boll Remembrances

Cotton Boll Remembrances are honorariums and memorials at the \$500 level of giving.

In memory of Elwood Gail Sturdivant  
Robert Polk Smallwood  
By Gail Sturdivant Mullins

In memory of Richard Dean Fisher  
By Patty J. Fisher Dixon

In memory of Thomas A. McNatt  
& John Christopher McNatt  
By Marelle, Glenn, & Craig

In memory of Bill (Pug) & Ruth Latham  
W. C. Latham Grocery  
By Debbie, Carey, Billene, Dianne, & Marelle

## Preservation of Museum Artifacts

Rhonda Young, a recently retired professional museum archivist with ties to Bemis, has volunteered to assist us with historical preservation of our valuable museum artifacts.

Rhonda assessed the Bemis Museum on March 2, and she concluded that we need a dehumidifying system. We have received two estimates ranging from \$6,000 to \$17,400. A third estimate is pending.

The humidity is very high in the museum and can cause mold to form and destroy our valuable artifacts. Please consider a donation to this much needed dehumidifying system. Thank you.



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### Major Donor

One-time gift donations of \$1,000 or more will be added to the Major Donors Plaque displayed in the entryway of the museum.

### Memorials and Donations

The following memorials and donations have recently been received by Bemis Historical Society.

#### Monetary Donations

Dr. Bruce Herron  
Jane M. Alderson

#### Memorials

In memory of Aileen Haltom Barry

Donated by  
Charlie & Becky Crockarell  
Dr. & Mrs. Ronald Kirkland  
Sue Roark

In memory of Jack Stutzman

Donated by Sue Roark

In memory of Jean Wyatt Roark

Donated by Sue Roark

In memory of Opal Buckingham

Donated by Sue Roark

In memory of Paul Benton Fisher-York

Donated by Larry & Jennifer “Jenny” Beeman

In memory of Ray Landers

Donated by Sue Roark

In memory of Richard Dean Fisher

Donated by  
Larry & Jennifer “Jenny” Beeman  
Charlie & Becky Crockarell  
Benton Fisher  
Dennis “Craig” & Olive “Bonnie” Fisher  
Jacob & Kathleen Gummer Fisher  
Kenny & Susan Fisher  
Alice F. Isaac & Ann Knight  
Joel and Brenda Jackson  
Billy Jones  
The Hubert Williams Estate & Family

In memory of Robert E. Belch

Donated by  
Bob & Dot Anderson  
Patsy Collins  
Geri A. Coyne  
Englewood Baptist Church  
Joel & Brenda Jackson  
Ricky & Norma McPeake  
Nettie R. Shelton  
Peggy Greene LeCroy, Sheila Greene Henderson,  
& Sandy Greene Wilson

### Bemis Artifact Donations

The following artifacts have recently been received:

Tillie Brinkley Nesbitt's Bemis Y basketball uniform  
Tillie Brinkley Nesbitt's J B Young Meeow Yearbooks:  
1942-1946

Two framed photos of Tillie Brinkley Nesbitt

Donated by Jackie Nesbitt Barnett

Fabric from Bemis Cotton Mill

Donated by Phyllis Hale Dancer

Books from estate of Richard Fisher:

*Travels in Greece MDCCXCVI*, from Bemis School  
Library

*Travels in Greece Vol II*, dated 1796 from Bemis  
School Library

*Travels in Greece Vol IV*, dated 1796 from Bemis  
School Library

*Theater Projection*, dated 1937

Donated by Judy Fisher

Glass brick from Bemis Cotton Mill window

Donated by Charlotte Hammond

“A Glimpse of History” 1915 Bemis Pentecostal  
Church forward

Donated by Ruth & Pete Pruitt

West Bemis Rosenwald School development plans

Donated by Rhonda Young

### Sterling Award Recipients

Bemis Historical Society is proud to announce that two Society members have been selected by Jackson Area Business & Professional Women as 2020 Sterling Award recipients.

Vice Chairman Kathy Haney Williams was selected for her volunteer work with Bemis Historical Society, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, US Daughters of 1812, Mid-West TN Genealogical Society, and South Side High School Alumni (Classes of 1957-1979).

Society Member Jennifer Rowan was selected for her volunteer work with National Society Children of the American Revolution, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, and US Daughters of 1812.

### 2020 United States Census

If you have not completed the 2020 US Census, please do so as soon as possible. Census results will be used to:

- Direct billions of dollars in federal funds to local communities for schools, roads, and other public services
- Help your community prepare to meet transportation and emergency readiness needs
- Determine the number of seats each state has in the US House of Representatives and your political representation at all levels of government.

1-844-330-2020 or <https://2020census.gov/>



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### Bemis Website and Social Media

Bemis news, stories, photos, and memories are shared on the Bemis website and social media.

Bemis Historical Society <https://bemishistory.org/>

The Bemis Museum

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Bemis-Museum-149237151757283/>

If you grew up in Bemis, TN

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/155498407861366/>

Bemis, Tennessee “Then and Now”

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/BemisTennesseeThenaandNow/>

Bemis, Tennessee through the photo lens of Barbara Haney Shepard

<https://www.facebook.com/Bemis-Tennessee-through-the-photo-lens-of-Barbara-Haney-Shepard-286911158167110/>



Photo by Kathy Haney Williams

Photos by Barbara Haney Shepard & Kathy Haney Williams



Photo by Barbara Haney Shepard



Photo by Barbara Haney Shepard

### Bemis Historical Signs

Historical signs were erected in 2019 at 13 locations.

- SITE OF HERRON CHAPEL BAPTIST CHURCH 1912  
116 Bemis Lane
- ENTERING HISTORIC BEMIS SINCE 1900  
West of railroad track on Bemis Lane
- AUDITORIUM BUILT 1921-1922, COST \$80,000,  
SEAT 850 – 2 N Missouri Street
- ORIGINAL 1900 I.C.R.R. SPUR TO MILL  
2 N Missouri Street
- SITE OF YMCA BUILT IN 1916 – S Missouri Street
- SITE OF DEPOT UNTIL 1945 – 215 S Missouri Street
- HOME OF DR. KELLY SMYTHE, BORN 1880, DIED  
1-30-64 – 2 Farwell Street
- WEST BEMIS SCHOOL BUILT 1916 A ROSENWALD  
SCHOOL – 2<sup>nd</sup> Street at Butler Street
- NEW TOWN STARTED IN 1928, FINISHED 1931  
1 Roberts Street
- SITE OF J. B. YOUNG HIGH SCHOOL BUILT 1940  
230 D Street
- SITE OF THE ORIGINAL SCHOOL BUILT IN 1903,  
150 PUPILS
- SITE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUILT 1924-1925  
B Street at Tennessee Street
- NEW MILL OFFICE BUILT 1920 POPULATION 2500  
A Street

Historical signs were erected or will be erected in 2020 with sponsors.

- SITE OF BEMIS COTTON MILL 1900 – A Street  
Family of Robert Hardy Haney & Rachel Maness Haney – Sponsors: Barbara Haney Shepard & Kathy Haney Williams
- SITE OF SKATING RINK/GIRLS Y BUILT 1940 –  
S Missouri Street – In memory of Red Nesbitt & Tillie Brinkley Nesbitt  
Sponsor: Jackie Nesbitt Barnett
- THE COMPANY STORE - BEMIS MERCHANTILE STORE - GROCERY DEPT 1902 – S Missouri St  
Sponsors: Joel & Brenda Jackson
- LUMBER SHED – 137A Bemis Lane  
In memory of Floyd & Ivar Wilson Johnson  
Sponsors: The Joe & Sue Roark Family

Historical signs will be erected. Contact Joel Jackson if you are interested in being a sponsor. Locations will be assigned on a first come-first served basis with payment - \$100 per marker.

- BEMIS CEMETERY 1900 – Bemis Cemetery Road at Cane Creek Spur
- HORSE BARN BUILT 1908 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Street
- J. B. YOUNG HOUSE BUILT 1900
- NEW BEMIS GIN 1953 – 1 Gin Street
- SILVER CIRCLE BUILT 1920-1921
- SITE OF FIRST GIN 1908
- THE FALLS/THE DAM BUILT 1900  
(two access points)
- THE GOLF COURSE (two locations)
- THE HOG PENS





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### Bemis Historical Society's Board of Directors

If you have questions or comments, please contact the Board of Directors.

Chairman Joel Jackson 731-424-0739 home  
joeljackson2@eplus.net

Vice Chair Kathy Haney Williams 731-225-6938 mobile  
KatherineWilliams@charter.net

Secretary Robert Gaugh 731-499-2229 mobile  
rgaugh@gmail.com

Treasurer Anita Roark 731-427-2609 home  
arr285@me.com

### Museum's Company Store

There are a variety of items for sale in the Company Store with proceeds supporting maintenance of the Museum. Mail a check to the PO box or (to purchase items locally) contact the Board of Directors.

	Cost of Items	Shipping Costs
Baseball Caps*	\$13	\$7
Cat-in-the-Bag License Plate	\$7	\$3
Historical Ornaments**	\$17	\$5
Coloring Book w/Bemis History	\$10	\$2
50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary DVD w/123 photos	\$15	\$5
Map of Bemis from 1932	\$10	\$7
Schematic of Bemis Cotton Mill	\$10	\$7

\*Baseball cap – structured, cotton twill in blue with mesh back in charcoal, 6 panels

\*Baseball cap – unstructured, cotton twill in red, 6 panels  
2-3 caps can be shipped for \$8 postage/handling.

\*\*Historical Ornaments

2009 – *The Bemis Auditorium (Mary Spellings)*  
2012 – *Judson Moss Bemis Fountain (Rosalee Gibbons)*  
2015 – *Bemis Cotton Mill (Rosalee Gibbons)*  
2020 – *Union Church/Bemis United Methodist Church (Melanie Marcom)*

2-4 ornaments can be shipped for \$6 postage/handling.

Other items are listed on our website.

<https://bemishistory.org/museums-company-store/>



### Dogwood Trees Planted

Members of the Jackson-Madison NSDAR Chapter planted two dogwood trees in our park and held a dedication on December 30, 2019, with members of the Bemis Historical Society.

### TSDAR Books Donated

The Jackson-Madison DAR Chapter donated a two-volume set of books titled *Legacies of Our Great Grand Mothers - Early Tennessee Women*, published in 2015 by Tennessee Society Daughters of the American Revolution.

### Monthly Meetings – 2020

Bemis Historical Society meetings are held the third Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. at Bemis Mill Village Museum. Attend our meetings to learn about Bemis and the surrounding area and to preserve our history.

#### Programs for 2020:

February 18 – Kathy Haney Williams presented a program about the Jackson City Directory and US Census Records that provide information about Bemis families and their jobs in the Bemis Cotton Mill.

March 17 – Meeting cancelled due to COVID-19

April 21 – Meeting cancelled due to COVID-19

May – Bemis Heritage Days cancelled for 2020

June 16 – Robert Gaugh – Civil War Union Veterans in Bemis, TN

July 21 – Lucy Smith and Greg Hammond – Congo Street and Old West Bemis School

August 18 – Jackie Utley – How Tennessee Secured the Right for Women to Vote in August 1920

September 15 – Joel Jackson – Judson Moss Bemis' Advice to His Grandchildren

October 20 – Rodger Holtin – American Pop Songs Inspired by the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927

November 17 – Christmas Memories in Bemis

We will not have meetings in December and January due to cold weather and high utility bills to heat the museum.

