



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 2022



Bemis Auditorium/Museum – 1922–2022

## BEMIS HERITAGE DAY

**MAY 21, 2022**



Bemis Heritage Day will be held on Saturday, May 21, 2022, at the Bemis Mill Village Museum which was built in 1921-1922 as the Bemis Auditorium. The centennial celebration will honor this beautiful building located at 2 North Missouri Street in Jackson, TN (formerly Bemis). We will also celebrate the bicentennial anniversaries of the City of Jackson and Madison County. Special guests will be Jackson Mayor Scott Conger and Madison County Mayor Jimmy Harris.

Museum doors will open at 10:00 a.m. with free admission. Browse the museum to visit with friends and to view artifacts and vintage photos. Visit the museum's Company Store to purchase a cookbook, coloring book, keepsake hand-held fan, historical ornaments, baseball caps (Historic Bemis and Chat 'N Chew), DVDs of vintage photos, and other items listed on our website.

At 10:10 a.m., there will be a grand opening of the new playground equipment purchased from funds donated by Amerigroup Corporation for the Stella Duncan Park of Bemis at 110 South Missouri Street. The grand opening will be led by Tony Black, Director of the Jackson Recreation & Parks Department, with special guests: Amerigroup President Chad Pendleton and Amerigroup staff members Madeline Mays, Psasha Taylor, Evan Swafford, and Kelly Shearin.

From 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., Bobby McAlexander will display his impressive and detailed ceramic replica of the Chat 'N Chew, a well-known hangout, that was located beside South Side High School on South Highland Avenue from 1958 until 1972. Rhonda Young will have a display for historic preservation, "Archives R Us: Preserving Our Family Archives."

From 10:30 until 11:00 a.m., a program inside the museum will include a joint proclamation by Mayor Conger and Mayor Harris. There will be a portrayal of Ransom Hammond, Employee of Bemis Bro. Bag Company, portrayed by his grandson Greg M. Hammond, and a portrayal of a Bemis Book Club Founder from 1930, portrayed by current member Judy Roach Dorris. The Jackson-Madison Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, will recognize our United States veterans on Armed Forces Day. The City of Jackson Fire Department will display a large flag of the United States of America in front of the museum.

Lunch will be available under the tent on the front lawn of the museum from 11:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. (or until sold out) with delicious barbecue plates by Gaylon Cooper for \$10 per plate (including soft drink). Will Kemp from R & J Feed Supply will provide homemade strawberry ice cream (made in an ice cream maker powered by a John Deere motor) for \$3 per cup with all proceeds to Bemis Historical Society. Enjoy live music from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s performed by the Bemis Boogie Blues Band – Willi X Evans, Steve Patterson, Tony McCaslin, and Bobby Cleary.

From 1:00 to 2:00 p.m., Joel Jackson, Chairman of Bemis Historical Society, will present a slideshow of photos and a video about the Bemis Auditorium/Museum, including the entire building – attic, balcony, main floor, basement, and tunnel.

Children can enjoy the splash pad at the Bemis Mill Memorial Park located at 7 A Street and the playground at the Stella Duncan Park. Games will also be available at the museum for children and the young at heart under the direction of the Jackson Recreation & Parks Department with Recreation Manager Bridgett Parham and staff. Get ready for a game of washers, cornhole, and other fun games.

Bemis Historical Society looks forward to sharing our Bemis heritage on May 21. Anyone interested in the history of Bemis, Jackson, and Madison County is welcome to attend.



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### Cotton Boll Remembrances

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

In memory of Richard Dean Fisher  
Donated by Richard Jackson

In memory of Onus and Shirley King  
Donated by Onus King Family

### Artifact Donations

The following artifact donations have been added to the historic preservation of Bemis Mill Village.

Bemis Cotton Mill ledgers from the estate of the late John Maddox Webb

Donated by Connie Webb Ledbetter

Bemis Cotton Mill plate

Donated by Farrell Mills

Bemis Boy Scout pack flag

Keith Crowley's skating rink whistle

Donated by Tommy Wheat

### Monetary Donations

Thank you to the following donors for their generous support.

Alice-Catherine Carls

Nellie M. Gaia

Joe Nip McKnight

Doris K. McKenzie

Sue Roark for Bemis Heritage Day

Penny Stutzman for a museum tour

### Thank You to Dennis Hays

Thank you to Dennis Hays for turning off the museum's water in the winter and turning it on in the spring. Dennis has provided this dedicated service for twenty-one years.

### 1950 US Census

The 1950 census records were released by the United States National Archives on April 1, 2022. This website provides full access to the 1950 census images, including population schedules, enumeration district maps, and enumeration district descriptions.

If you want to know what someone did in the Bemis Cotton Mill in 1950, search for them in the census to see their occupation and industry (cotton mill).

<https://1950census.archives.gov/>

### Memorial Donations

Thank you for your kindness in remembering your loved ones with a donation to Bemis Historical Society.

In memory of John David "J.D." Carden

Donated by Robert & Joan Allen

Donated by Joe Billy & Mildred Austin

Donated by Matt & Marla Baggett

Donated by Harry & Jennie DeLoach

Donated by Joe & Elizabeth Holmes

Donated by Joel & Brenda Jackson

Donated by Royce & Shirley McClintock

Donated by Doris K. McKenzie

Donated by Sue Johnson Roark

Donated by Patty Stanfill Wilken

Donated by Kathy Haney Williams

In memory of Billy Joe King

Donated by Sadie Collins Rogers

Donated by Sue Johnson Roark

In memory of Wallace Mills

Donated by Mattie Sue Johnson Roark

In memory of Cynthia Pickens Simmons

Donated by Richard & Margie Simmons, Pam,

Bettye, Laura, Trinity, Trey, & Casey

In memory of Charlotte Stanfill Wright

Donated by South Side High Class of 1962

<https://bemishistory.org/memorials/honoraria/>

### Bemis Historical Markers

New historical markers were erected in 2021-2022 with sponsors.

COW PASTURE #1 – Second Street near the creek –

In memory of Ennis Theus Sr. & Napoleon Theus –

By Ennis Theus Jr. & Beverly Theus Chism

FIREHOUSE – A Street at TN Street – In memory of

Billy Pruitt – By James "Pete" Pruitt

JUDSON MOSS BEMIS MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN –

110 S Missouri Street – In memory of Robert &

Marie McNatt – By Ronnie & Patsy McNatt

SITE OF TENNIS COURT, 1922-1947 –

112 S Missouri Street – In memory of WWII Vets:

Raymond, Charlie, Robert, & Marvin McNatt –

By Ronnie & Patsy McNatt

The following historical sites need sponsors.

BEMIS CLINIC – S Missouri Street

CLASS OF 1939 & 1940 SCHOOLHOUSE – TN & B

Streets (northwest corner)

HOME EC HOUSE – TN Street

SHOE SHOP – By West Drug Store (building in back, sign on street)

SHOP/CAFETERIA

SKEET RANGE – Cemetery Road

Thank you for supporting the historic preservation of Bemis Mill Village.



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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 joeljackson2@eplus.net

Vice Chair Kathy Haney Williams

731-225-6938 KatherineWilliams@charter.net

Secretary Robert Gaugh

731-499-2229 rgaugh@gmail.com

Treasurer Anita Roark

731-427-2609 arr285@me.com

### Bemis Historical Society Received Three Grants in 2021

During 2021, three grants were awarded to the Bemis Historical Society and helped us meet our expenses, as well as purchase much needed audio/visual equipment. The Board of Directors would like to thank Joel Jackson, Bemis Historical Society Chairman, for doing most of the work that was instrumental in procuring two of the grants below, in addition to many grants in the past.

#### 2021 Grants

##### Tennessee State Library & Archives ARPA Grant for \$4,860

This grant allowed us to purchase the following audio/visual equipment:

- Dell Da Lite 120" Projector Screen, remote controlled
- Dell Epson Projector
- Pro Sound Gear 12 Channel Mixer
- 2 Rockville Audio Powered Speakers with Stands
- Samson 4-channel Wireless Mic System
- 250 ft. HDMI Cable for installation.

##### The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia, Inc./Avalon Charitable Fund for \$500

This grant was in honor of the William Benton Fisher, Sr. & Acenah Mills Fisher family.

##### Jackson-Madison County Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC) Grant for \$500

This grant was used to help us fund our annual Bemis Heritage Days event.



### Revisiting the Rosenwald Days

Walter Brewer Bemis Community Center  
324 Second Street, Jackson, TN 38301  
Friday & Saturday, May 6 & 7, 2022

As we look back on the early history of Jackson-Madison County, the West Bemis Elementary School (now Walter Brewer Bemis Community Center) is clearly a notable place to be recognized. The facility was built as a Rosenwald School in 1916 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. According to research by the Middle TN State University Center for Historic Preservation, it is the oldest Rosenwald school building in the State of Tennessee still standing in its original structure. As a part of the Jackson-Madison County Bicentennial Celebration, the WBBCC will sponsor an event themed "Revisiting the Rosenwald Days" on May 6<sup>th</sup> (6 pm – 8 pm) and May 7<sup>th</sup> (10 am – 3 pm). The weekend will be filled with food, fun, and games that bring back memories of the Rosenwald School days. A special presentation will be directed by Dr. Jerry Woods that is sure to be both educational and entertaining.

Through much hard work of volunteers and the support of many friends, local businesses, the City of Jackson, and Madison County, this building has been beautifully restored. The board of directors and advisors are excited to share in the Jackson-Madison County Bicentennial Celebration! The WBBCC is a 501c3 non-profit organization. The board of directors is seeking contributions to help with expenses for this project and any amount would be greatly appreciated. Please plan to attend these special events.

Thanking you in advance!

Ida "Lucy" Smith, Director

731-343-4965

[wbbemis324@gmail.com](mailto:wbbemis324@gmail.com)



### Annual Membership Dues

Annual membership dues are \$25 for individual or family memberships. Mail payment to:

Bemis Historical Society

PO Box 9266

Jackson, TN 38314-9266





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### Bemis Auditorium/Theatre/Museum 1922-2022

The Bemis Auditorium/Theatre was built in 1922 for \$100,000 with a seating capacity of 850 to provide a place for school activities and other community meetings and entertainment featuring motion pictures that were shown at hours to accommodate all three of the mill's shifts. Helen Keller, Carl Perkins, and Johnny Cash performed on the stage. The Bemis Auditorium/Theatre closed in August 1958 and was later used as a warehouse.

Bemis Historical Society was established in 1998. The Society purchased the building in March 1999, and the building was restored and named Bemis Mill Village Museum. Society officers, members, and interested friends maintain the building and its interesting artifacts with membership dues, donations, and grants that are important for our historical preservation of the museum.

This photo was taken in 1932. The photo on page one was taken by Bill Hollamon in 2018.

## Bemis Historical Society's Monthly Meetings

Bemis Historical Society meetings are held the third Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. at Bemis Mill Village Museum. Attend our meetings to learn about Bemis and the surrounding area and to preserve our history. If you would like to present a program, please contact Vice Chairman Kathy Williams.

### Recent meetings:

August 17, 2021 – Johnetta Wilbourn Black –

Wilbourn Family of Bemis

<https://youtu.be/tsu6P0gn0tU>

Bemis Museum Tunnel Tour – Video by Bill Hollamon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ijlm-JTgFQo&t=108s>

September 21 – Evelyn Keele – *The Making of Historic Madison, the Story of Jackson and Madison County, Tennessee* by Emma Inman Williams

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivSsPvBNajY&t=1603s>

October 19 – Joel Jackson – George R. Wadleigh's Memories of Bemis, Oct 1900 – 1931

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oL\\_rXC1oejc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oL_rXC1oejc)

November 16 – Vintage Bemis Photos & Blueprints

February 15, 2022 – Kenneth Newman – Education: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

March 15 – Rodger Holtin – 1922 Popular Culture

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v601taveq\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v601taveq_E)

### Upcoming meetings:

April 19 – David Mayo – FindAGrave & Tombstone Preservation

May 21 – Bemis Heritage Day – Saturday

June 21 – Steven Harrison – Photo Identification & Restoration

<https://bemishistory.org/monthly-meetings/>



## Museum's Company Store

There are a variety of items for sale in the Company Store. Mail a check to the PO box, attend a meeting, or contact a member of the Board of Directors to visit the museum.

	Cost of Items	Shipping Costs
Baseball Caps – Historic Bemis <sup>1</sup>	\$15	\$7
Baseball Caps – Chat 'N Chew <sup>2</sup>	\$15	\$7
100-Year Anniversary Fan <sup>3</sup>	\$5	\$2
Historical Ornaments <sup>4</sup>	\$17	\$5
Cat-in-the Bag License Plate	\$7	\$3
Museum Note Cards/Envelopes (10)	\$10	\$3
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

<sup>1</sup>Baseball cap – unstructured, cotton twill, 6 panels, choice of three colors – red, khaki, or gray

<sup>1</sup>Baseball cap – structured, cotton twill, blue with mesh back in charcoal, 6 panels (limited supply)

<sup>2</sup>Baseball cap – unstructured, cotton twill, black, 6 panels with an embroidery of the Chat 'N Chew sign  
2-3 caps can be shipped for \$8 postage/handling.

<sup>3</sup>Keepsake fans (1-2) can be shipped for \$2 postage.

<sup>4</sup>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/>