

THE BEMIS STORY



A publication of Bemis Historical Society
Bemis Mill Village Museum, 2 North Missouri Street, Jackson, TN 38301
Bemis Historical Society, PO Box 9266, Jackson, TN 38314-9266
www.bemishistory.org & https://www.facebook.com/TheBemisMuseum
Winter 2024-2025



*The "Cat-in-the-Bag" logo is the registered property of Bemis Company, Inc. and is used with permission.
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Happy 125th Anniversary to Bemis, Tennessee!!! 1900 - 2025

Bemis, Tennessee ~ 1900

On **January 8, 1900**, Judson Moss Bemis closed the deal with Madison County on 300 acres of land for \$6,000 and designated it as the site of a cotton mill and town. This can be found in Madison County deed book 58, page 514.

True to his promise, Mr. Bemis immediately started construction on the Mill and at the same time began constructing houses for the workers. Professional mill constructors, Lockwood, Green and Company, were hired with Joseph E. Serrine (1872-1947) in charge. Mr. Bemis also had the able assistance of his son Albert Farwell Bemis (1870-1936, MIT Class of 1893), Charles A. Tripp (1870-1930, MIT Class of 1893), and George R. Wadleigh (1874-1974, MIT Class of 1897). In only eighteen months, the building was up and operating with 20,000 spindles whirling.
~ Joel Jackson, Chairman, Bemis Historical Society

Bemis, Tennessee ~ 2025

Mark your calendars for **Saturday, May 17, 2025**, as the Bemis Historical Society celebrates Bemis' 125th anniversary in grand style during our annual Bemis Heritage Day – rain or shine! Join us for a day full of festivities, including an anniversary party with cake and ice cream, a parade, games, and more.

To ensure this celebration is a success, we need your help! Volunteers are essential for making this event memorable. If you'd like to lend a hand, please reach out to any of our Bemis Historical Society officers. Contact information is available on page 4.

Stay tuned for updates, which will be posted on our Facebook page and website.

Celebrating 125 Years!!!

Bemis Heritage Day
Saturday, May 17, 2025
Rain or Shine

Exciting News: Grant Awarded for Museum Restoration!

Ending in a significant win for our historic museum, the Tennessee General Assembly allocated \$5 million in its 2024-2025 fiscal year budget specifically for capital maintenance and improvements to museums across the state. This funding, provided through the Tennessee State Museum, supports nonprofit 501(c)(3) museums and is designed to preserve and enhance our historical treasures for generations to come.

Our application, submitted on August 15, outlined the critical repairs needed at our museum. We requested funds to replace the deteriorating east entrance, complete extensive restoration of the west entrance, and address a recurring drainage issue—infamously known as the "Gaugh Boys' Water Puddle." (See page 3 for photo.)

After an anxious eight-week wait, we were thrilled to receive official word on October 14. We've been awarded \$19,080!

Currently, we're working on finalizing paperwork with the Tennessee State Museum in Nashville to secure additional funds. In the meantime, we have reached out to three qualified contractors to prepare for the renovation. We anticipate completion by June 30, 2025.

This grant allows us to make vital improvements and ensures a safe, welcoming environment for visitors and members alike. We're grateful to the Tennessee State Museum and General Assembly for their support, and we look forward to sharing the completed project with our community!

~ Joel Jackson, Chairman, Bemis Historical Society



Joel Jackson

Monetary Donations

Thank you to the following donors for their generous support in 2024.

Mannie Bemis
Alice-Catherine Carls
Pauline Darnall
Nellie Maitland Gaia
Teddy & Jacqueline Hazlehurst
Dr. Kenneth Newman
Anita Ruth Roark
John Morgan & Sandra Morgan Williams



Treasurer Anita Roark collected dues and sold Company Store items at Bemis Heritage Day 2024.

Cotton Boll Remembrance

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

In memory of Joe C. Moore & Sue Wyatt Moore
Donated by Joe Wyatt Moore

Memorial Donations

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

In Memory of Joe Billy & Mildred Austin
Donated by Bobby & Joan Austin Allen

In memory of James Ronald "Ron" Fisher
Donated by Larry & Jenny Beeman
Donated by Robert J. & Dorothy J. Fisher
Donated by Nancy, Christopher, & Michael Wheeler

In memory of Jimmy Gibbons
Donated by Richard & Linda Higgins, Ka Higgins, & Beth Higgins Jones
Donated by Bob & Robin Horwitz, Kelsey & Bonnie Ledford

In Memory of Linda Jennings Higgins
Donated by Joel & Brenda Jackson

In Memory of June Turner Holloway
Donated by Sue Roark
Donated by Richard & Marjorie Simmons

In Memory of Allen & Evelyn Kelly
Donated by Thomas & Pamela Fasciocco

In Memory of James Clark "Jim" Mitchell
Donated by Joel & Brenda Jackson

In Memory of James Ronald "Ronnie" Patrick
Donated by South Side High School Class of 1962

In Memory of Albert Lee Smith
Donated by Richard & Marjorie Simmons

In Memory of Ray Curtis "Shot" Young & Nina French Young
Donated by Peggy Young Riley & Barry L. Young

<https://bemishistory.org/memorialshonoraria/>

\$500 CEDC Grant

Thank you to Jackson-Madison County Community Economic Development Commission for the \$500 CEDC grant that we received July 2024.

Artifact Donations

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

Cat-in-the-Bag Program
By Ronald Bain

1948 Graduation Invitation, Graduation Program, Senior Night Program
By Amanda Chaney

1950 Edition of Bemis 50th from Estate of Pat Latham Johnson
By "Bo" Deaton

Ronald Fisher Estate Donation, 67 Papers, Photos, & Game Programs
By Benton Fisher

J. B. Young High School Cup
By Bobby McAlexander

Poem by Raymond Brasher, Church History, Photos of Bemis, The Jackson Sun list of Bemis Houses Sold, 1923 & 1946 Show Ads
By Leslie Mills from Farrell Mills

Dr. Kelly Smythe's Wheelchair
By Carol Pirtle, widow of Gordon Wayne Pirtle

40 Artifacts
By Peggy Young Riley

Set of 15 Cat-in-the-Bag 20-Year Programs; 24 Pay Envelopes of Minnie Granger; Set of 9 Travel Post Cards to Bemis; Obits of Nannie Belle Sisson, Miller Granger, & Myrtle Tims; 1992 Bemis Clock
By Larry Ragan

End of WWII 3 - 18" x 20" Photos
By Unknown

1955 J. B. Young High Diploma of Bobby Presson
By Patty Sue & Tillman Weir

Monthly Meetings

Join us for our monthly meetings every third Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. at the Bemis Mill Village Museum. Meetings are held in February, March, April, June, July, August, September, and October.

Don't miss Bemis Heritage Day, held annually on the third Saturday in May, when we celebrate our community's rich history.

These gatherings offer an opportunity to learn more about Bemis and the surrounding areas, as well as help preserve our shared history. If you're interested in presenting a program, please reach out to Vice Chairman David Mayo.

2025 Meetings

February 18
March 18
April 15
May 17 – Bemis Heritage Day
June 17
July 15
August 19
September 16
October 21

Missed a meeting? No worries! Our programs are uploaded to YouTube.

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

2024 Programs

- February 20 – David Mayo – Pirtle Ancestors from Hardeman County to Madison County
https://youtu.be/_PBchOl-eYc
- March 19 – Dr. Kenneth Newman – Delores Ballard, Jackson's Own Emily Dickinson
https://youtu.be/P_IsvRbY_Ag
- April 16 – Diane Lassiter Harris – Lassiter-Matthews Families and Wells & Lassiter Dairy
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiPBkOgYKKw>
- May 18 (Saturday) – Bemis Heritage Day – Joel Jackson – How Water Built Bemis
https://youtu.be/acyDz4mgYIM?si=Wtn2Nybi_mn0zXBE
- June 18 – Rodger Holtin – Music from World War II
<https://youtu.be/VolluQJoajw?si=px6czjnIPHTzFBkr>
- July 16 – Alice Yarbro Holtin – Yarbro Family from Bemis
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MYe0eGx7R0>
- August 20 – Ricky Long – History of Hollywood Cemetery
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzvtM3urgQ4>
- September 17 – Jamie Carden Boone – Carden Family Memories
<https://youtu.be/ibDhu1LZ0hQ?si=pZORCDD6xq5ROT9V>
- October 15 – Dr. Kenneth Newman – Memories of Bemis & Malesus
<https://youtu.be/SBt9kdhX174>
- November 19 – Kathy Haney Williams – WWII-Era Bemis Scrapbook
<https://youtu.be/pr-d0GKetbs>



The Gaugh boys enjoyed the water puddle at Bemis Heritage Day 2024.

Bemis Heritage Day
Saturday, May 17, 2025
Rain or Shine



125th Anniversary of Bemis, TN

Thank You to Garey & Robert Gaugh for Installing New Equipment

During Bemis Heritage Day 2024, Joel Jackson presented a captivating program using the newly installed projector and screen. Special thanks go to Robert Gaugh and Garey Gaugh for their efforts in installing the new equipment, enhancing the experience for all attendees.





Left to right: David Mayo, Sue Roark, Brenda Jackson, Joel Jackson, Kathy Haney Williams, Rhodes Barnette, Anita Roark
November 19, 2024
Photo credit: Jamar Coach, The Jackson Sun.



Happy Holidays!!!

Bemis Scrapbook – The Jackson Sun

The Jackson Sun’s photojournalist, Jamar Coach, attended the Bemis Historical Society meeting on November 19. During the meeting, Kathy Haney Williams showcased a remarkable piece of local history: 35 pages from a World War II-era scrapbook. This collection, spanning newspaper clippings from 1937 to 1953, highlights milestones in the lives of Bemis residents, including military service, engagements, marriages, births, and deaths.

<https://www.jacksonsun.com/story/news/local/2024/11/26/jackson-sun-clippings-dating-back-to-1937-debuted-at-bemis-museum/76413776007/>

<https://www.jacksonsun.com/gallery/news/2024/11/20/bemis-historical-society-takes-a-trip-down-memory-lane-with-jackson-sun-scrapbook/76461093007/>

Membership Dues

Please help with the maintenance of our beautiful museum by sending annual membership dues of \$25 for individual or family memberships to:
Bemis Historical Society
PO Box 9266
Jackson, TN 38314-9266

Memorial

James Clark Mitchell was a charter member of Bemis Historical Society, and he served as treasurer. Jim passed December 30, 2023. Condolences to his family and friends.

<https://www.shackelfordfuneraldirectors.com/obituaries/james-jim-clark-mitchell>

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. New items will be added before Bemis Heritage Day 2025.
<https://bemishistory.org/museums-company-store/>

New Museum Sign

Thank you to Vice Chairman David Mayo for his craftsmanship in creating a new sign for the museum’s front lawn. It will be erected after the holidays.

Bemis Historical Markers

New historical marker was erected in 2024.
SHOE SHOP – By West Drug Store (building in back, sign on street) – Richard Simmons

- The following historical sites need sponsors.
BEMIS HIGH SCHOOL, CLASSES OF 1938-1940
SCHOOL HOUSE – TN & B Streets (NW corner)
HOME EC HOUSE – TN Street
SKEET RANGE – Cemetery Road
SLUICeway CLEAN-OUT BUNKER – Center of Second Street lawn (big 5 ft x 5 ft concrete/very visible – provided water via twin pipes to mill pond from falls/dam)
BICYCLE HILL

Markers are \$100 each. Contact a board member to sponsor a marker. Thank you for supporting the historic preservation of the Bemis Mill Village.

BHS Board of Directors

If you have questions or comments, please contact the Bemis Historical Society’s Board of Directors.
Chairman Joel Jackson
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Vice Chair David Mayo
731-225-0634 davidalanmayo@gmail.com
Secretary Robert Gaugh
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