

Cookville

by Joyce Myers Cook

Cookville was the place of my birth and both parents. My mother inherited Cookville land from her grandfather, through her father. Both Hinshaw men died in 1935. My mother was 15 years of age with no parents. Cookville became her mother and father.

Buck Hinshaw, her cousin, said there was a big house and a little house on the Hinshaw land. He had lived in the small house. Maxine Myers Holt, another cousin, and her parents lived in the small house. John and Lillie, our Myers grandparents, lived in the big house. Aunt Lula Myers Bench lived there in 1935 when Grandpa Hinshaw died.

It was there I was born, in the big house, with two porches and high ceilings. Here, we had Bob, the horse, and Fanny, the dog. This was a short while before Fort Leonard Wood. Nearly one hundred years before my arrival was the Pulaski County arrival of the Joel B. Cook family, the founding pioneers of this, my birth area.

Little has been written about the history of Cookville. Joel B. Cook was an early Pulaski County pioneer who came in 1845. According to Steven D. Smith (*Made in the Timber*, 2003), this is considered late for settling but the reason was due to isolation, poverty of resources, and lack of fertile farmland.

The area was a rolling open land with woodlands, rough hills, valleys, and prairies with tall grasses. There was an abundance of wildlife for Joel B. Cook and other early settlers. This provided them with meat and furs. They also found numerous fruits in Pulaski County. The rough, rugged land suited the early hunters. Game, not fertile soil, was their main reason for settling. They liked the isolation and lack of both authority and political organization.

The Preemption Act of 1841, a homestead act, may have enticed Joel B. Cook to Pulaski County. This act "provided that a squatter could purchase 160 acres of land at a minimum price of approximately \$1.25 per acre" if he showed cultivation (Smith, 2003).

In 1850 Joel B. Cook's family was one of 630 homes in the whole of Pulaski County, which included portions of Dallas, Webster, Texas, Phelps, Maries, Miller, and Camden Counties and all of Laclede, Wright, and modern Pulaski County.

The Cooks were pioneer agriculturists. They purchased land, built a mill, and invested in the local economy. Joel B. Cook's mill is shown as Cook's Mill on the Roubidoux Creek on an 1873

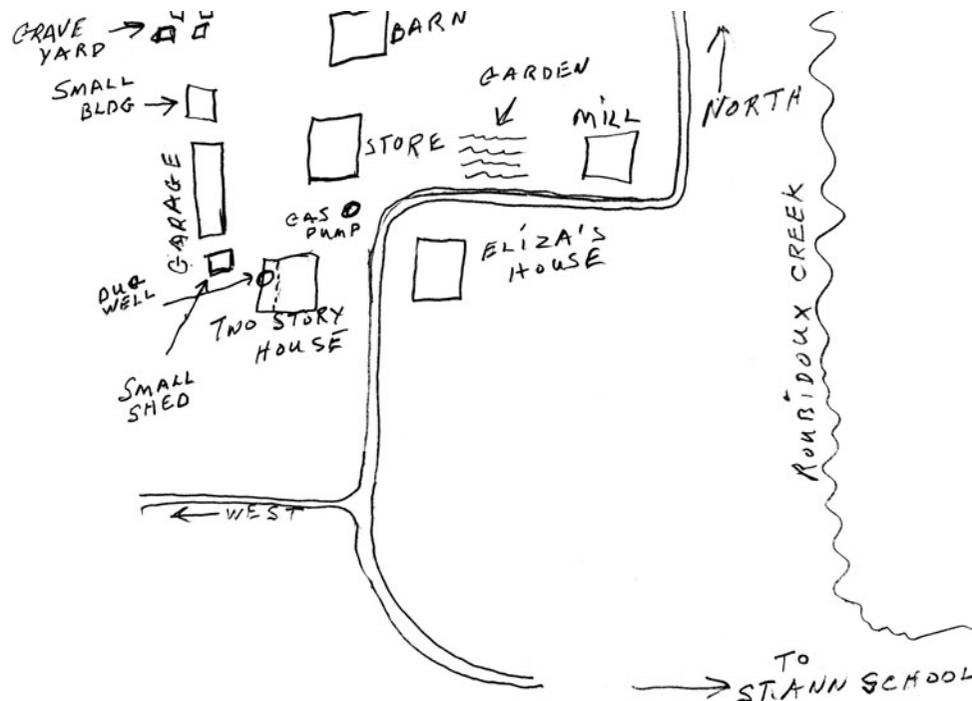
map. This data was gathered in the 1850s, but not published until 1873 due to the Civil War (Smith, 2003). The U. S. Census of Manufacturers only listed six flour and meal mills. Twenty years later, 1880, Pulaski County is shown on the same census as having five flouring and grist mills (Smith, 2003). Cook's Mill would have been one of those.

Cookville grew out of Cook's Mill. People gathered not only to have grain ground but to pick up needed supplies. Sometimes a post office and store were established nearby. Cook's Mill, on the Roubidoux, was surely a central place of the community. When the general store was added and the post office established, it met the need of shopping and trading.

Joel B. Cook was Cookville's early 1845 settler. However, the credit for the name of the little town, a general store, post office, mill and two houses "more likely comes from the tenth child of Joel B. Cook" (*Woody Cousins*, J. E. Smith, 1995 and *Pulaski County's Historic Place Names*, Richard Wilber, 1997, p. 5.) This was William Jasper Cook, or "Uncle Billy" as he was known. The Cookville Post Office was established in 1872 and William J. Cook was appointed Postmaster. He operated a general store at the same time.

Cookville was a recognized place name. Some areas were named for the local people, while other areas were named for the church or school there. Cookville most assuredly fit the first.

According to the 1910 census, Roubidoux Township in which Cookville was located had 187 families with 187 dwellings of which 123 were home owned. The others were rentals.



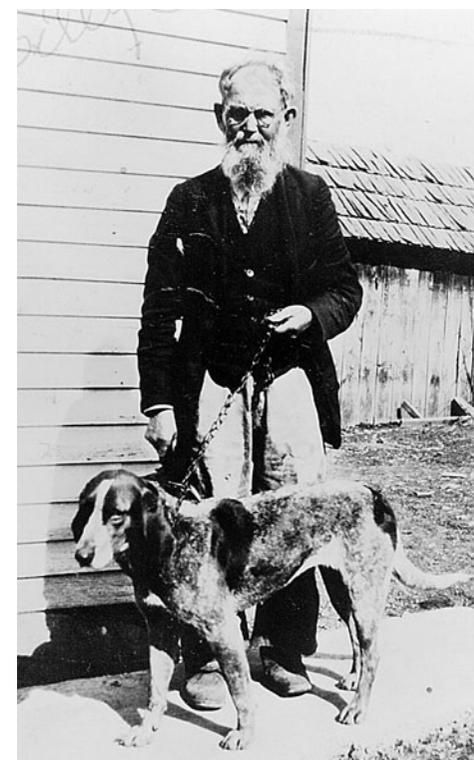
Map of Cookville drawn by Ken Hicks. All photographs and drawings courtesy of Joyce Myers Cook from her book *Cookville of Pulaski County, Missouri 1845-1941*.

Cookville's population was 48 in 1930.

Cookville has been described as a small community, the best fishing spot, a wide spot in the road, politically factioned, and a place for families to congregate. Don Payton, a former resident of the area and a former writer of a column in the *Springfield News Leader and Press*, described Cookville in his column "Remembering days gone by." He wrote, "Cookville. Most of the community social life revolved around Cookville which teemed with exciting things like soda pop, checkers, horse-shoes and Hambone..." Hambone came for one week each summer in August's scorching heat, drought, and depression. He was a one-man show, "part medicine man, part huckster, part flim-flam, part Jolson and part Will Rogers." Don further expounds on Hambone in a column "Dog Days..." (*Springfield News Leader and Press*, August 19, 1987) as "part charlatan, part magician and part ham, he sang, danced, emoted, peddled potions and elixirs." Amid diverse weather and economical times, Hambone made the people laugh.

Cookville was located above the Roubidoux Creek in the southwest corner of Pulaski County in Roubidoux Township, bordered by Laclede and Texas Counties and the Roubidoux Creek. Cookville was three miles west of the old Highway 17, which is now AW. The United States government procured it in 1941 to form Fort Leonard Wood.

On June 5, 1941 the United States Government sued for the land of the Breeden, Cook, Myers, and Woody families and all the families in and around Cookville, as well as those in parts of several other counties—land totaling more than 12,000 acres—to form part of what is now known as Fort Leonard Wood.



William Jasper "Billy" Cook, 1841-1931. Son of Joel B. Cook.

(The following is from the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 9, 1941.)

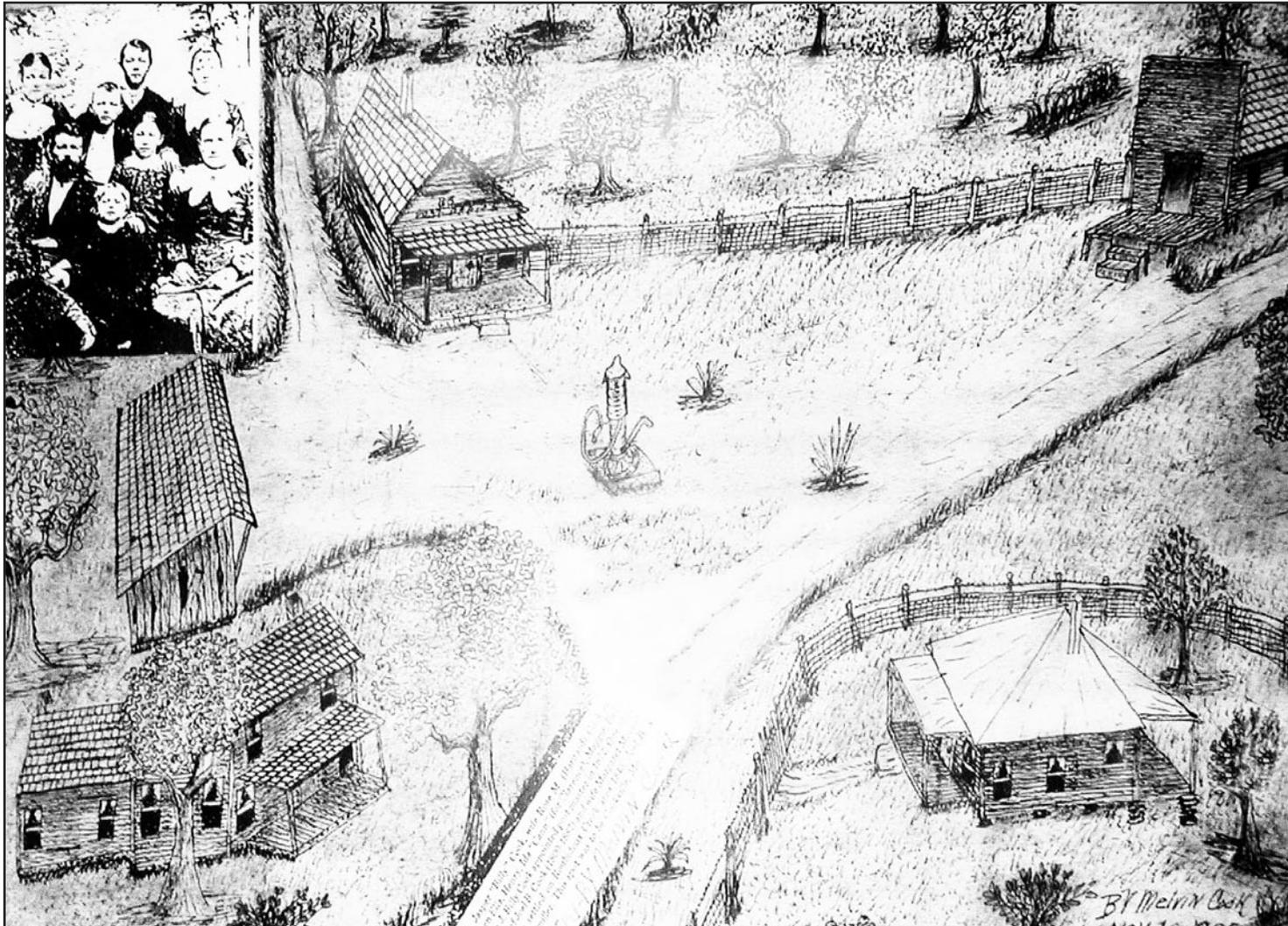
It's Moving Day in the Ozarks for Four Fort Wood Towns

Deep down in the Ozarks, usually the scene of an easy going existence, there is a buzz of activity these days as the residents of four small Missouri towns, namely, Bloodland, Palace, Tribune, and Cookville prepare to move their homes and businesses. Undoubtedly the largest single exodus the Ozarks have ever seen, it is necessitated by the establishment of the immense 65,000 acre army camp, Fort Leonard Wood, where approximately 50,000 soldiers will be trained in an area covering parts of four counties between Rolla and Lebanon. ...before many weeks (they) will be just a memory.

All were to move out and leave the homes that their forefathers had built by hand - a place that had been their home for nearly one hundred years. Although a date was set for the property to be vacated, one couple refused to leave. They were forcefully removed. Daisy Carrell Jackson wrote, "Kirby and Mae Bell were the closest to Macedonia Cemetery. A funny thing happened the day Ft. Wood took over. The Bells were not going to move, they would show who was Boss. So some soldiers came and loaded them up and moved them out near my home place (Carrell Corner) and left them Sit. So they decided they better move in a Hurry. So they moved to Lebanon."

Cookville today is site 22PU277. It is not a home, a store or a Post Office. Nor is it a town, village or hamlet. Only concrete foundations are left from Cookville's existence of 96 years. Cookville is no more, it was stopped short.

Cookville Views



This article is an excerpt from *Cookville of Pulaski County, Missouri 1845-1941*, 172 pages. Much more information on the Cookville neighborhood and families is available from Joyce Myers Cook, 42632 Hwy. U, Plato, MO or call 417-453-6245.

Left— A sketch of Cookville drawn by Melvin Cook in 1987. The inset picture is of William Jasper “Billy” Cook and his wife Rose M. (Barnard) Cook and children Ella, Henry, Ida, “Cann” (for Clarence), Maggie, and Belle. Billy Cook was appointed postmaster in 1879. He was one of 12 children of settler Joel B. Cook (1800-1887). The buildings are clockwise, from upper left: Cookville Store, mill, little house, big house, and storage shed.

The store’s gas pump is in the center. **Below**—A photograph of the store’s gas pump and pickup truck, ca. 1935.



The small house at one of the jogs in the road, denoted as “Eliza’s (Hicks) House” on the map on the preceding page.



St. Annie’s Road was Cookville’s main street with a couple of jogs “downtown.” The mill is at right background and part of the store is visible at left.



The two story house above, also known as the “Big House,” was one of the oldest homes in the Fort Leonard Wood area and located across from the small house. Originally a log structure, it is estimated the house was built in 1868.



Albert Lester Hicks, above, was the last postmaster. He is in front of the Cookville store. The inset is a postmark stamped on the last day, June 30, 1941—a Monday.