

in This Moment



A Visualization of **200 Years** of
Jackson-Madison County History

by Lendon Hamilton Noe

An Interpretation of 200 Years of
Jackson-Madison County History

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A Bicentennial Legacy Project

Creating this body of work has been a privilege and a great pleasure, and I am so grateful to Elaine Christian and the Bicentennial Committee for the opportunity. My thanks to Mayor Scott Conger and his staff, with a special thanks to Wanda Stanfill. My thanks also to the county mayors, Jimmy Harris and AJ Massey.

In many ways this has been a real community collaboration. I have profited from the work of all the local historians, storytellers, and creatives, both in print and online. These must begin with the work of Emma Inman Williams, author of *Historic Madison*, and with Marion B. Smothers and Mitch Carter for *Williams' Pictorial History*. Incidentally, Ms. Williams was my high school history teacher. Others who have inspired me include Harbert Alexander, DN English, Kent Gardner, Linda Higgins, Scott Parish, Trista Havner, Larry Ray and his *Three Stars of Tennessee* exhibit, and Ricky Long and his *Today in Madison County, TN History* posts. The staff and contributors of *Our Jackson Home*, especially Courtney Searcy and Gabe Hart, have been especially inspirational. And Scott Reeves and his online group "I Grew Up in Jackson, TN" have, to me, created a real online community that has been invaluable. Benny Page provided me with a wealth of vintage Jackson postcards that have helped to bring this whole body of work alive. Charlie Havner helped me solve myriad problems with hanging the show.

The poetry of James Cherry and Debra Tayloe (whose poem "In This Moment" has provided the title of this artwork) has given voice and provided depth to the visual images.

But none of this would have been possible without the help of Jack Wood and Evelyn Keele in the Tennessee Room of the Jackson-Madison County Public Library.

Stephanie Riley and her staff at B3 Creative are largely responsible for this catalog. Their photographer, Nick Gutierrez, has done a beautiful job. But I must give special thanks to their graphic designer, Lizzie LaFont, who has become my co-creator in this effort, sitting with me hour after hour designing and editing the work. She has been an absolute pleasure to work with.

Lastly, of course, there are friends and family who have made this journey with me for over 18 months. I love you guys. I know it's taken a lot of patience. The Jackson community at large has been so supportive of me my whole life, and I am eternally grateful.

My parents came to Jackson in 1947 and built a small ranch-style house, which still stands at 513 Arlington Ave. After World War II, my father, who was originally from West Monroe, LA, drove around the south looking for the right place to start a business and raise a family. Marrying my mother and deciding on Jackson were the best two decisions he ever made.

Lendon Hamilton Noe is a native of Jackson, Tennessee, where she was a professor of art at Lambuth University for 28 years. She maintains a studio and gallery at her home in Jackson. She completed her MFA in Painting and Mixed Media at Vermont College. Her work includes oil painting, original prints, mixed media, and installation. For the last 25 years, her work has been focused on natural history, and more recently she's become interested in ancestry. She enjoys creating site-specific thematic shows that are often inspired by and paired with poetry. Lendon enjoys teaching workshops in person, and you can find her online classes with Carla Sonheim at carlasonheim.com. You can see examples of her work on Instagram @lendonnoeartwork. She has also been working part time for the Art Museum of the University of Memphis producing community arts projects for the Lambuth campus in Jackson.

James E Cherry is the author of three collections of poetry, two novels, and a collection of short fiction. His latest novel, *Edge of the Wind*, was re-issued by Stephen F. Austin University Press in 2022. His recent poems can be found in *Fare Forward*, *Southern Indiana Review*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, and *Black Fire This Time*, an anthology (Willow Books, 2022). Cherry has an MFA in creative writing from the University of Texas at El Paso and has been nominated for an NAACP Image Award, a Lillian Smith Book Award, and a Next Generation Indie Book Award. A native Jacksonian, he is president of The Griot Collective of West Tennessee, a literary arts organization. His latest collection of poetry, *After the Storm*, is forthcoming in 2024. Visit jamesEcherry.com.

Debra Tayloe is a visual artist, photographer, and poet. She has participated in the University of Iowa's Summer Writing Festivals several years and often integrates her knowledge of language and writing with her Visual Arts background that she received at Lambuth College. She has designed and conducted many Artist Residencies working under State and Federal grants introducing many children and adults to hands-on arts experiences in visual art and the written word. She also served as Creator and Director of the Community Art Program at Union University for 27 years. Tayloe is a naturalist, conservationist, and gardener. She has been an avid reader since childhood. Her book of poems "In This Moment" was first printed in March of 2020 and she gave away all 100 copies to friends and passers-by.

PRELUDE TO AN ETHNIC CLEANSING Treaty of Old Town, October 19, 1818

Twenty-four months later, the white man is back.
He is always back, this same white man. Sharp Knife.*
We bled shoulder to shoulder in his battles

against the British. He supplied bullets
for our guns turned on those who looked
like us. This time he comes with another

piece of paper, the same piece of paper
we sign over and over. It honors nothing---
past nor future, just broken promises.

Time forgets and refuses to mend. Some say,
our leaders, Itawamba Mingo and his brother
Tootesmastube, pocketed a bag of silver

before handshakes. It really does not matter.
Sharp Knife's words echo down generations:
"The hunt is over, the game is gone."

Either our brains or our signature
was going on that piece of paper. We surrendered
the earth roamed by the spirit our ancestors,

a culture inscribed on our tongues,
our souls for money to wipe away tears.
Aba Binni'li* could not save us

from a bruised sky, bare feet and blankets,
a winter's journey across a history
that always ends where it begins.

*Sharp Knife. Andrew Jackson

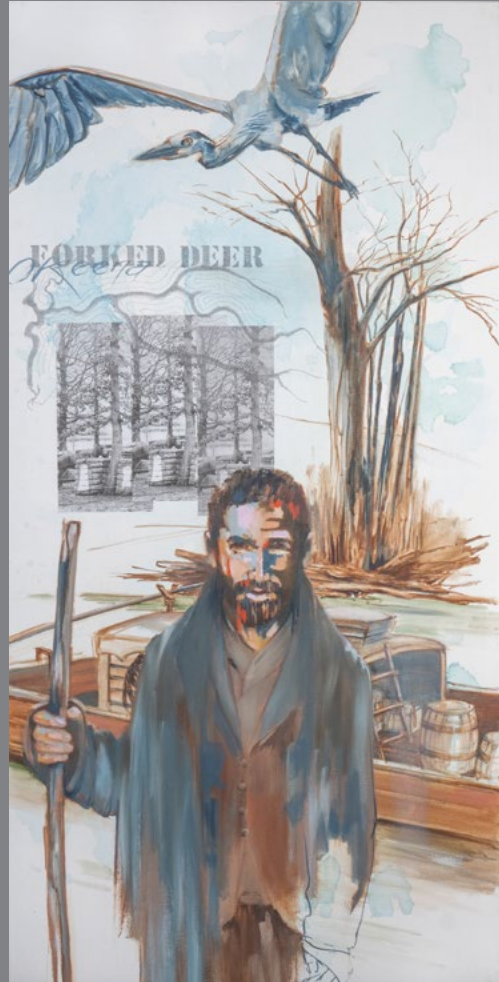
*Aba Binni'li'. Chickasaw name for God

– James E Cherry

"I've never seen such a beautiful
country before, nor one where
industry can be so well-rewarded."

– *The Murphy Papers*, 1822, Historic Madison Third Edition, 1986

They came from Virginia, from North Carolina,
from Kentucky. They came in search of a new
life, new land, and a fresh start.



"Cluck, cluck," said the hen.

"Today it is hard to imagine that Jackson was once a port city. For many years
however, transportation in Jackson centered around the Forked Deer River, which
was used to transport agricultural products to ports downstream on flat-bottom
boats, keel boats, and small steam boats."

– Harbert Alexander, *Tales of Madison*

"A tripartite economy centered around agriculture, the railroads, and lumber
carried Jackson through World War II..." In the early years cotton was king and
supported a plantation economy.

– *The West Tennessee Historical Society Papers*





A SLAVE CHILD'S CONFESSION

**Mammy, is Ole' Massa gwiner sell us tomorrow?
Yes, my chile.
Whar he gwiner sell us?
Way down South in Georgia.*

I wasn't the only child on Massa Doak's thirty acres. There was Dicy, Esther, Nelly, Phillis and Andy. My name Henry.

We was on the east fork of Spring Creek long before the whole land was named after a president a long ways from here. By time I turned eight, I did the same thing

the grown folk did: chopping cotton, slopping hogs, tending to what Massa's wife, Mrs. Patsey, needed tending to. I was always hungry. I felt like a pig at a trough. I learned to scratch

and curse the other kids over potatoes, grits, pot likker. Our black bellies all shiny and swollen. My ribs shined through the holes in my shirt. The only thing the younger kids wore was they naked bodies.

In the shadow of day, we climbed trees, galloped stick horse or Hide the Switch, where we hide a hickory and whoever finds it would chase the other kids to try to whip them. We slept

in one room, side by side with another family. A fireplace in between. Pa made us a table, benches and a bed. Before Sunday go to Meeting, we go down to the spring. It tell us

what we look like. Some nights, Massa come get Esther or Phillis when he think aint nobody looking. Or maybe he don't care. The grown folk say the world is big and round.

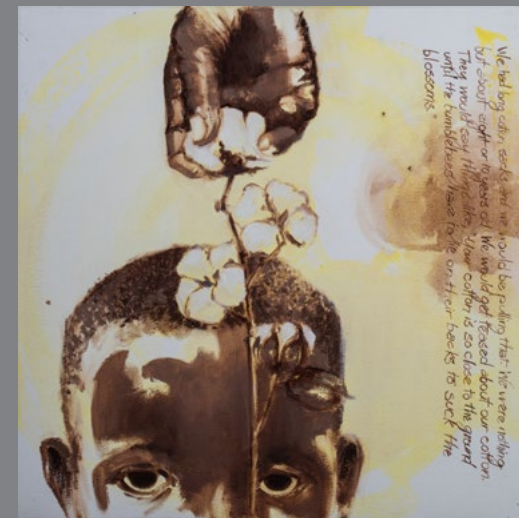
But far as I can tell it ends at the edge of a cotton field. It has to be flat 'cause everybody thats ever been sold I aint never see again. The grown folk say change is coming, that the town wont be called

Alexandria no more. Will be named after a general. I say that's ok. Nobody ever ask me what I want to be when I grow up. I say that's ok too. My name is written in the book.

When Massa die, I belong to his son, Alanson Fielding. Me and a dark gray horse.

**Steven Mintz, "Childhood and Transatlantic Slavery," in Children and Youth in History*

- James E Cherry



"The impact of industrialization in Jackson began with its development as an important rail link. The first rail transportation arrived in Jackson in 1857."

The grown folk say
change is coming,

“Going off to war was an old tradition in West Tennessee. Men had been marching down Royal Street and boarding trains at the N.C. & St.L. Railroad Depot since the Civil War when the 6th Tennessee regiment road away to find its destiny at Shiloh.”

- Harbert Alexander, *Echoes and Footprints*



Revolutionary War
 War of 1812
 Civil War
 Spanish-American War
 War with Mexico
 World War I
 World War II
 Korean War
 Vietnam War
 Desert Shield
 Desert Storm
 Global War on Terror



“August 31, 1862- End of August:

I wish this war could close and that war would be no more, here or elsewhere—

farewell August 1862, with a sad heart, farewell.”

- Jackson’s most famous diarist, Robert Henry Cartmell, as quoted in Harbert Alexander’s book, *Tales of Madison*

The 30th Infantry Division, nicknamed the “Old Hickory,” after Andrew Jackson, has participated in every war in which the U.S. has been involved.

- Harbert Alexander, *Echoes and Footprints*

equality of representation

“On August 9, 1920, the Tennessee legislature met in special session to vote on the Nineteenth Amendment, which would grant women the right to vote. Thirty-five states had already approved it. Twelve states had voted against it. A three-fourths vote of the forty-eight states was required for it to pass. Tennessee was the last to vote, and it could only pass if Tennessee voted for it.

The Woman’s Suffrage Movement had been going on for seventy-two years...”

– Harbert Alexander, *Echoes and Footprints*



Discord to peace.

“Healing is a word we usually associate with the miraculous, a moment clearly marked by before and after. Sickness to health. Pain to relief. Discord to peace.”

– Photo essay by Courtney Searcy in *Our Jackson Home*



After World War II, the introduction of major manufacturing firms began to transform the makeup of the city.

“Cities are never built by brokers and sharers, but by men of nerve and enterprise who see beyond the present time, the prospective dollar, and whose investments are not confined solely to individual profit, but sees in the general prosperity the highest and most commendable degree of personal agrandizement.”

- The Jackson Sun
July 7, 1875

IN THE AFTERMATH
TORN TO P



Madison schools closed
Sounds of Power fall

Jackson Fair
GRAND CHAMPION



I was a colored street in a colored neighborhood in a segregated town



SHANNON STREET SPEAKS

*I went down on Shannon Street
Now to buy some alcohol
I told him to put it half-full a-water
But they didn't put it in any drop at all.*

Sonny Boy Williamson, 1938
Jackson, Tennessee

First of all, I wasn't no cousin to Beale or Bourbon's nephew and was never in the family of brights lights, jooks or all-night parties. That's just wishful talk been handed down from tongue to tongue.

This is what you need to know: I was born between 1872 & 1875 to Thomas Shannon, a saloon keep and first sheriff of this county. I grew from dirt road to brick, was known more for livery stables than live music,

where blacksmiths outnumbered blues musicians. I was a colored street in a colored neighborhood in a segregated town and some of my residents did about as well as colored folk could do: Andrew Cain & Thomas Davis turned an old

cotton warehouse into a saloon around the corner. Not far from there, Isaac H Anderson built from the ground up an ice cream pallor, office space, pool hall and barber shop all under the same roof. The Black Masons would hang out there for a while. The Colored Methodists

Publishing House was a neighbor and they still in the history books today. But if you ever had trouble finding me, there were landmarks to get you there: Haynes Fish Market, Armour Meat Company,

Marvin Jones Seed Store. The north side of me was pretty much business and commerce, the south end folks just trying to survive. And if you cant find the Farmer's Market today, you cant find nothing. And then there was that lil harp blowing Negro

who couldn't hold his liquor and made me famous in a song. Tried to tell him 'bout that drinking and I'm sorry things ended the way they did. I love Sonny Boy Williamson. Always will. Its true. You could plug the hole in your soul with gutbucket blues, sanitize your troubles

with a pint of Hootch. If you could find it. But I wasn't about to tell you where. Matter of fact, I've probably ruined your notion of what I used to be. Its hard to tell what's real and what's not anymore. You don't even have to believe

me. I'm just an old man with potholes for knees and vacant lots where my hair used to be. But I'm still here. There ain't nobody else I'd rather be.

- James E Cherry



The Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Baptists organized the first churches in Jackson. The Catholic community and the Jewish community were not far behind.



“Jackson’s education tradition continues today with a consolidated city-county public school system, four private K-12 schools, and four institutions of higher learning: Jackson State Community College, The University of Memphis at Lambuth, Lane College, and Union University.”

– Steven L. Baker, *Tennessee Encyclopedia*

The 47 bell carillon, the nation’s best, is housed in the steeple of the First Presbyterian Church and is a memorial to the men from Jackson and Madison Country killed in World War I and World War II.



“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

–Philippians 4:8

King James Version and the motto of Lambuth College





“Someone will ask me where I’m from, and I’ll start with Tennessee. They’ll inevitably comment on the mountains, and I’ll have to disappoint them by telling them that I’m on the other side of the state – the flat side. Then, I’ll tell them I’m from Jackson and they’ll wait for me to explain where that is. Thus my postscript was born: ‘...right in between Memphis and Nashville.’”

-Gabe Hart, *Our Jackson Home*

‘...right in between
Memphis and Nashville.’



“I wanted old trees and sidewalks and houses with full front porches. I wanted original craftsmanship in my house. I wanted high ceilings and thick walls and built-in bookshelves. She told me that my neighborhood reminded her ‘of what a real neighborhood should look like.’ Yes. A real neighborhood has history and diversity. Let us all strive for that. Let’s add to our story while taking precious care of our past and all who make up our community.”

- Gabe Hart, *Our Jackson Home*

‘what a real
neighborhood
should look like’





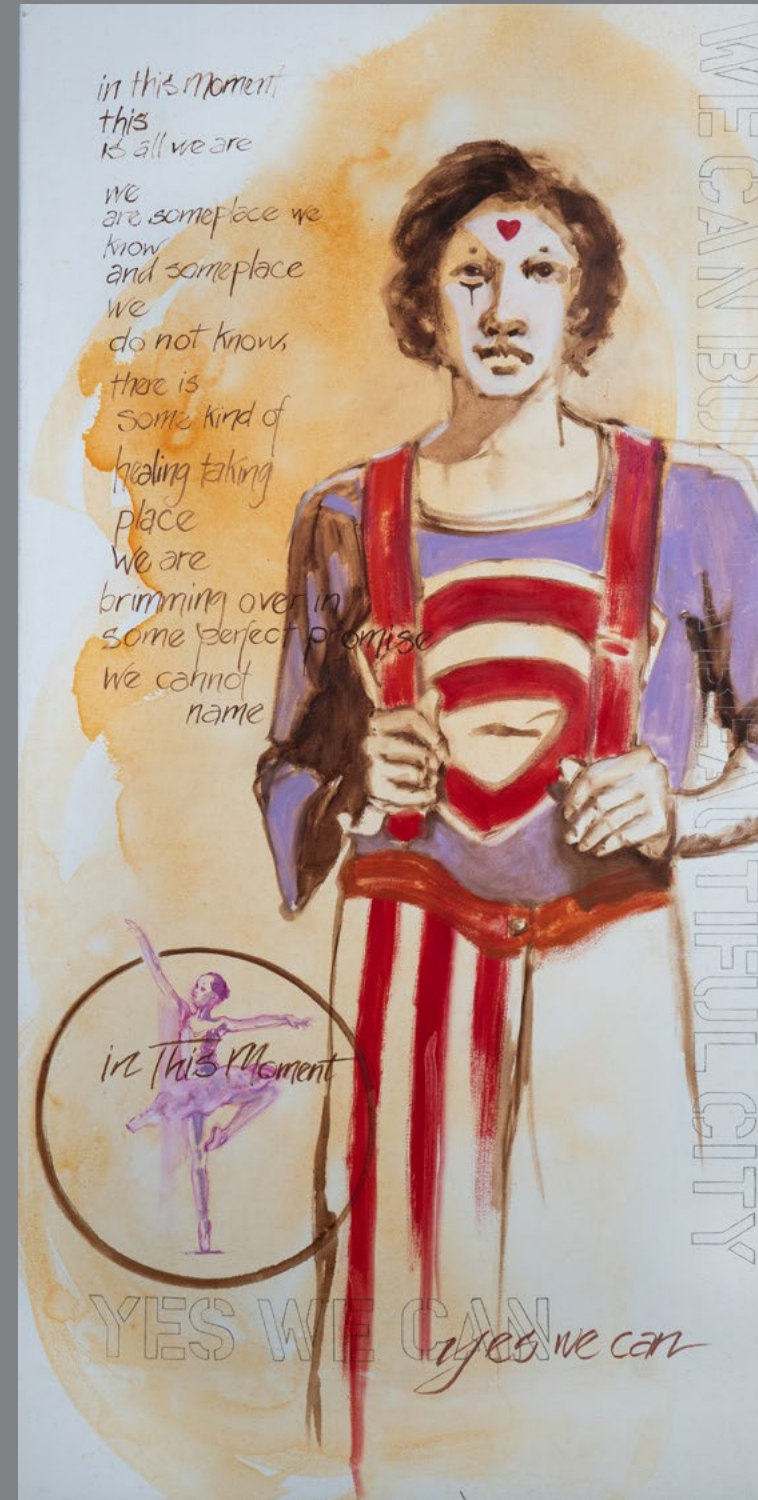
Find a place you trust

"Sister Corita Kent was an art professor for Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles, CA. She made a well-known list of rules for art students—including the first rule: 'Find a place you trust, and try trusting it for awhile.' I like this rule because it feels true, to my own experience at least." "Corita wrote about the duty of an artist in society, and explained that our creative endeavors are important because the act of making reflects the universal act of imagining and putting our abilities to use to better our world whether we're mothers, or lawyers, or poets."

- Courtney Searcy, *Our Jackson Home*



"All of our hope does no good in our heads. We have to do the work."



In This Moment

in this moment
this
is all we are

we
are someplace we
know
and someplace
we
do not know,
there is
some kind of
healing taking
place
we are
brimming over in
some perfect promise
we cannot name

- Debra Tayloe

Appendix

Page 6

- An early entrepreneur, Captain Barney Mitchell, was pioneer navigator and trader on the Forked Deer River in the 1830's.
- A great many of the original settlers to Jackson are buried at Riverside Cemetery.

Page 7

- The West Tennessee Experiment Station is part of a statewide network of experiment stations operated by the University of Tennessee. The first buildings were built in 1908.
- By 1860, Madison County included 11,400 whites, 10,012 slaves, and 83 free persons of color. Even today, the rural landscape surrounding Jackson is dotted with cotton fields, and the population still reflects the early racial mix.
– *Tennessee Encyclopedia*

Page 8

- Built in 1900, three miles south of Jackson, Bemis Bag Company had a significant impact on the Jackson community. It became a major buyer of cotton produced in the area, as well as a major employer. By 1950, the Bemis Bag Company had 1,400 employees and was the largest employer in Madison County.
- “The best string for flying a kite was the 7-ply string from the mill. And it was free.”
– Joel Jackson, *Bemis Tidbits*

Page 9

- “The people is gone wild on this ere railroad machine.”
– *The Bolivar Bulletin*, 1871
- The Mississippi and Tennessee Central and The Mobile and Ohio were the first railroads to serve Jackson. The three largest rail companies serving Jackson were the Louisville and Nashville, the Illinois Central, and the Gulf Mobile and Ohio

Page 13

- “The district known as West Tennessee Healthcare has now grown into a comprehensive health system operating hospitals and clinics, as well as providing other healthcare services and now employs over 7,000 people throughout the region.”
– West Tennessee Healthcare website
- This horse-drawn ambulance was used by the old Umphlett and Griffen funeral home around 1910. Established in 1852, Umphlett and Griffen is Jackson's oldest business.
– Emma Inman Williams, *Jackson and Madison County: A Pictorial History*

Page 14

- While the City of Jackson was founded in 1822, its first utility, a manufactured gas service for streetlights, commercial and residential lighting did not begin until 1871. By the end of the 19th century, electric power and a public water and wastewater system developed.
– *Our Story*, Jackson Energy Authority website



Page 15

- The Jackson-Madison County General Hospital opened August 11, 1950 and was segregated until 1966. Dr. Lance Spalding performed the first cardiac bypass surgery at Jackson-Madison County General Hospital in April of 1983.
- Madison County experienced deadly tornadoes in 1999, 2003, and 2008, with each storm costing millions of dollars in damage and leading to a years-long recovery process.
– *The Jackson Sun*
- “Decades ago, Jackson was home to some of the best fighters in the country.” The Jackson Boxing Club has been instrumental in helping to mold the youth of Jackson. “I was so wrapped up in boxing that I didn't have time to get in trouble.”
– Gabe Hart, *Our Jackson Home*

Page 16

- In the late 1880's, mule-drawn trolleys took their passengers to the trains that stopped at the old Union Station or brought them down many streets in Jackson. With the advent of electricity, the mules were retired.
– Emma Inman Williams, *Pictorial History of Jackson-Madison County*

Page 19

- “Camp meetings are very frequent and large in the southern country, and with horse races, they form the principal diversion of the season.”
– John Rogers in *West Tennessee*, 1840, *Historic Madison*

Page 20

- “In the twentieth century, Jackson was linked with major state highways, US-70 passed through Jackson where it joined US-45, a major north-south highway corridor. In the late 1960's came Interstate I-40. While in the 1990's, the expansion of US-412 to a four-lane highway linked Jackson with the Mississippi bridge of Interstate I-155 west of Dyersburg.” Continuing Jackson's legacy as the “Hub City.”
– *Tennessee Encyclopedia*

Page 22

- A young participant in the Lancaster Park concert band, active at the turn of the century.
- “Ester Magda Randolph, our ‘granny’ played piano for silent movies in the 1920's and entertained at family gatherings. I remember the tapping of her fingernails as she played and sang.”
– Rita Randolph, *A History of Horticulture*
- Jackson has been home to many musical traditions, including supporting a symphony founded in 1961. And of course being the home of Carl Perkins was instrumental in the development of rockabilly music. Performing arts of all kinds, including theater, ballet, and other forms of dance have found a supportive home throughout our history. The Jackson Arts Council has been instrumental in the support of the visual arts as well.

Page 23

- Godspell, with its representation of the Passion, has been a popular community theater production in Jackson.

We shopped for school clothes every fall at Rosenbloom's and Holland's! And we had a wonderful dress maker!

I bought my first grown up bathing suit from there

When I saw this picture, it reminded me of the Christmas parade downtown and how the stores and streetlights were all decorated

Back in the early 60's I remember the Rosenbloom's sales ladies were all dressed in black dresses and wore high heels. It added an air of elegance to the fashion floor..

What I remember is how wonderfully cool it was in the summer when it was so hot outside. Also the perfume counter in the front had such wonderful smells.

Loved the stairway!!!! We lived a charmed life!!! Jackson was a great place to grow up!!!!

There was sparkly stuff in the sidewalk in front of Rosenbloom's and Kisbers....

Comments from the "I Grew Up in Jackson, TN!" public Facebook group

Administrator: Scott Reeves



2010
JACKSON
MADISON CO
BICENTENNIAL