

Sweetwater 150

Special commemorative edition



1875 - 2025



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Sweetwater downtown a view of history

The City of Sweetwater is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year, with some of the focus on the variety of changes and advancements that have occurred in the city.

Despite celebrating their growth, the City of Sweetwater can also celebrate how much history has remained the same.

The city's historic downtown area has managed to maintain its historic appearance throughout the years, providing visitors and residents alike the unique ability to see the town in a similar way to how it was originally built while still enjoying modern amenities.

"Isaac Lenoir was the founder of Sweetwater. Lenoir City was founded by his family, so that is kind of our sister city," Sweetwater City Administrator Jessica Morgan said. "He began to sell lots between the railroad and creek area and that is exactly how the downtown area got started."

From there, things started to take off for the infant city as a governing body was formed along with facilities.

"City government started patrolling it, they created a volunteer fire department and it continued to grow until 1875 where it was actually incorporated as a city," Morgan stated. "Now, a lot of the same buildings are still standing. The older generation will still call the Scruggs building the new block ... we have a lot of history in the downtown area and maintaining that historic appearance is one of our proudest accomplishments."

Morgan stated that goal continued even with certain restoration projects.

"When we rebuilt the depot in 2013 or 2014 we had modeled it after the original depot that was in town," she noted. "That depot was involved in a civil war skirmish, so we have a lot of that history down there as well. We are on the Civil War trail as being a strategic supply point and that was why they burned the depot."

One of the more locally famous locations in town that was around during the Civil War era was the Biggs House.

"A lot of our buildings were built in the early 1900s," she expressed. "We also have a lot of buildings that were built in the 1800s but a lot of early 1900s buildings are still being used as businesses today."

She believes the city has been able to maintain its historic appearance due to the diligence of the downtown business owners.

"People in our town have understood that in order for people to have the funding to keep up the old buildings they will have to have thriving businesses in them," she said. "I think our citizens



shopping local and understanding the importance of us having downtown events has helped keep our character alive and allows our heritage to continue to grow."

Throughout the years, the downtown businesses have passed through a variety of hands, with some being passed down to family members while others have sold to other entities.

Biggs House, Mayes Avenue historic attractions for Sweetwater



Special to The Advocate & Democrat

The Biggs House in Sweetwater, one of the town's oldest standing homes, was once occupied by two of Sweetwater's early pioneers--Isabella Rankin and her husband, Alexander Biggs.

The Biggs House is one of the most iconic buildings in the City of Sweetwater as well as one of the oldest features in the town.

According to Sweetwater City Administrator Jessica Morgan, the Biggs House was acquired by the city a few years ago after it was donated to the city.

"The city intends to refurbish the building," Morgan said. "We have a mason working on it now to try to repair the historic brick and then we will be looking at roofing and infrastructure as far as power and water goes."

Morgan stated that the Biggs House is the oldest standing building in the City of Sweetwater that officials are aware of.

"One of our plans is to get it put on the National Historic Registry after we finish the masonry repairs," she noted. "Doing that will help us in seeking grant funding for the building."

Another historical location for the City of Sweetwater is Mayes Avenue, which also contains a historic building that was recently placed on the National Historic Registry.

"There are several homes on that road as well that have some very unique architecture and have had some pretty significant historic events happen," Morgan said. "For us, Mayes Avenue is kind of a gathering place. It is a quintessential American neighborhood because it has beautiful yards, beautiful landscaping, big old trees, historic homes and neighbors still go out and speak to each other."

The popularity of Mayes Avenue even provides unique experiences for the holidays.

"Halloween on Mayes Avenue is on a whole other level," Morgan expressed. "Before anybody buys a house on Mayes Avenue they have to know about Halloween because they will basically be inundated with thousands of people every year on Halloween."

The homeowners on Mayes Avenue also take pride in their historic homes and do their best to maintain their properties.

"They put a lot of work and effort into preserving those historic homes including the trees and landscaping," she stated.

Originally, Mayes Avenue was a part of the Main Street area, however it was split off due to the arrival of Highway 411.

"That was kind of the main drag in town hundreds of years ago and you can kind of see that reflected in traffic patterns that are there," Morgan noted. "That is our primary section of the historic zoning district so the people that own homes there or buy homes there have an interest in preserving those historic homes and we are grateful for what they contribute to the communities history and heritage."



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Sweetwater's union with I-75 has proven critical to town's history

The creation of Interstate 75 brought tremendous impact to both the City of Sweetwater and the Monroe County area.

Completed in December of 1974, Interstate 75 (I-75) spans Monroe County solely through two exits that connect to the City of Sweetwater.

"Luckily, our local officials at the time had enough foresight to go and lobby for two exits instead of just one," said Sweetwater City Administrator Jessica Morgan. "It's lead to the development of gas stations, restaurants and now we have industry near the interstate with plans to add to that in the future, so having I-75 come by Sweetwater has had a huge impact."

The country is nearing the 70th anniversary of the creation of the interstate system as, according to the State of Tennessee, it was created through legislation by U.S. Sen. Albert Gore Sr. of Tennessee and Congressman George Fallon of Maryland.

The series of roads were termed the "National System of Interstate and Defense Highways" at the item, with

the state noting they were often referred to as the Fallon-Gore Act.

I-75 through Tennessee stretches north to south along the entire state, including the portion in Monroe County.

According to The Advocate & Democrat's predecessor, The Sweetwater Valley News, in the Thursday, Dec. 19, 1975 edition, the final portion of I-75 was set to be completed on Dec. 20, 1974 after it began in June of 1971. The total cost, according to the paper, was \$36 million.

The portion through Monroe County was termed a "vital link" because of the traffic it would pull from Highway 11. The completion was celebrated with ceremonies attended by then-Gov. Winfield Dunn.

Another benefit from the interstate is the ability to bring more tourists to not only Sweetwater but to the rest of the county as well.

Unfortunately, though the interstate does bring in new opportunities for positive change to both the City of Sweetwater and to the Monroe County area, it can also bring in issues as well.

"There are times when we will have police calls that are specifically about people who may not be in the best shape that just happened to wander off of the interstate," Morgan noted. "We do have some hot spots, but the governor's new Violent Crime Intervention Fund actually gave us a significant grant this year to try and combat some of those issues."

Moving back to the positive impacts of the interstate, Morgan noted that the City of Sweetwater has been blessed by the activity of the roadway.

"A lot of cities have trouble when an interstate comes through because their more minor highways struggle with businesses and their Main Streets die," she noted. "We've been lucky to combat that and have a thriving main street and you can



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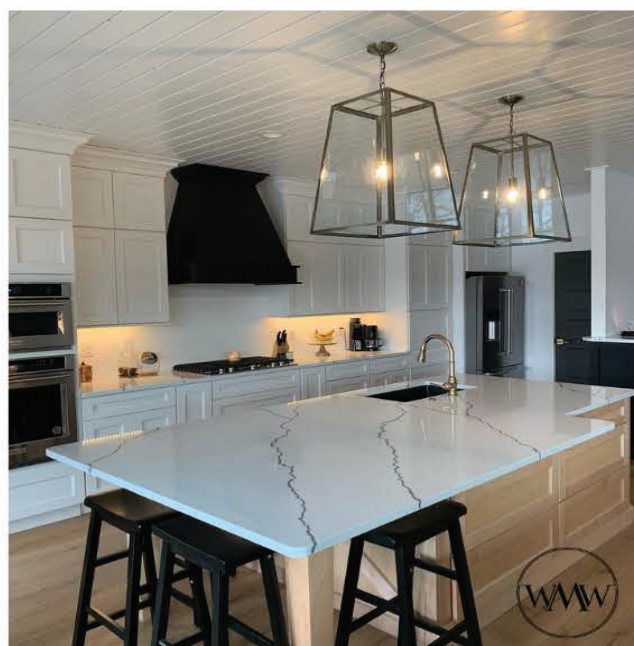
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Man who cast deciding 19th Amendment vote has strong ties to Monroe County

TYLER BOYD
Contributor

In 1927, a 22-year-old Cumberland University law school graduate named Winfred Earl Michael began his first job as an attorney in Sweetwater.

Michael was raised in northern McMinn County on a farm between Sweetwater and Niota. He was the junior partner in a new law firm: Burn and Michael, Attorneys. His partner was Harry Thomas Burn, a native of Niota.

Harry T. Burn was a local hero who had made national headlines for his role in the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In August 1920, the Tennessee General Assembly convened for an "extraordinary" session to take action on the 19th Amendment.

If it were ratified, it would enfranchise millions of American women. The U.S. Congress proposed the amendment in June 1919. The amendment only needed one more state (3/4 of the then 48 states) to become national law. The ability to vote of millions of women across the country were in the hands of Tennessee's state legislators.

Burn was the oldest of four children born to James Lafayette "Jim" Burn and Febb Ensminger Burn. The family lived on the corner of Main Street and Burn Road (the home no longer stands and is now the site of the fellowship hall of the First Baptist Church of Niota).

Jim Burn was the station-master at the Niota Depot and Febb Burn, who had worked as a teacher, ran the household. By 1918, Harry Burn's sister Sara and father Jim had passed away. A week before his 23rd birthday, he won election as a Republican to represent McMinn County in the state House of

Representatives. During this session, Burn voted for the "limited suffrage" bill that became law in April 1919.

This bill recognized the right for women to vote in Tennessee's municipal and presidential elections.

When Burn left for the extraordinary session in August 1920, he had planned to vote to ratify the 19th Amendment. Upon his arrival in Nashville, both pro- and anti-suffrage forces attempted to influence his vote. He received telegrams from his constituents back home in McMinn County misleading him about the district's stance on woman suffrage.

One telegram claimed that "over 90%" of the people in the district opposed suffrage. Despite the fact that national political figures wrote to him urging him to vote yes, Burn faced immense pressure from politicians in Nashville that threatened to end his political career if he voted for suffrage.

A few days into the extraordinary session, Burn appeared to have moved over to the anti-suffrage side. His move terrified the suffragists who had worked so hard to get the amendment proposed.

When approached by the suffragists, Burn told them that he could not "pledge" himself at the moment, but promised that he would "do nothing to hurt them." Unconvinced by his assurance, the suffragists had little faith he would help their cause.

Although not a political activist, Febb Burn had been following the woman suffrage campaign for years. When she read the newspapers over the weekend of Aug. 14-15, she read a "bitter" speech given by State Sen. Herschel Candler (her own district's senator and her son's mentor) blasting the idea of women voting.

Taking a break from her



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Harry T. Burn

FOR GOVERNOR

Courtesy of the Burn family

Shown here is an ad for Harry T. Burn during his run for governor.

SEE BURN, Page 10



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Burn

Continued from Page 8

daily farm work, she sat down in her “little chair” on the front porch and wrote a letter to her son. Having run out of ink, she wrote the letter in pencil.

The most famous line of this now legendary letter read: “Hurrah and vote for suffrage and don’t keep them in doubt. I noticed Chandler’s (sic) speech. It was very bitter. I have been watching to see how she stood, but have not seen anything yet.”

Her other son Jack (my great-grandfather) took the letter to the Niota Post Office, addressed it in ink, and mailed it to his brother Harry at the state capitol.

The timing of the arrival of this letter in Nashville could not have been more impeccable. On the morning of Wednesday, Aug. 18, 1920, a House page delivered the letter to Harry Burn on the steps of the state capitol.

At 10 a.m., the state House of Representatives convened. House Speaker Seth Walker, who had recently betrayed the suffragists and joined the side of the antis, called for a vote to “table” the resolution to ratify the amendment.

Walker and many of the state legislators wished to delay action on the resolution to avoid taking a stand on the issue. After all, election day was less than three months away.

Burn voted “aye” on the motion to table the amendment. This resulted in a 48-48 tie. Walker called for another vote to table the amendment. Once again, the result was a 48-48 tie, with Burn voting “aye.”

Burn believed in woman suffrage and wanted to vote yes. He also wanted to have a future in politics and thought that his district was staunchly opposed to the amendment.

The threats against his political career were also on his mind. He was content to delay action on the amendment until the next regular legislative session in January 1921. He was not even sure he would be reelected in November.

In his mind, tabling the amendment seemed to be the most prudent course of action. However, Walker’s next move changed everything.

He thought he had the votes to kill the amendment for good. He called for a vote on the “merits” of the resolution to ratify. A 48-48 tie would shoot the amendment down in the state, maybe even in the country.

Every other southern state had already rejected the amendment. If Tennessee

voted it down, millions of American women would not be able to vote in the 1920 general election and the amendment’s momentum would have slowed even more.

Burn had promised to not hurt the cause of the suffragists. Taking his mother’s advice, Burn voted “aye” on the “merits” of the resolution to ratify the amendment.

This broke the tie and the amendment was ratified. It was pandemonium in the state House chamber as the suffragists celebrated their victory, 72 years in the making.

Harry Burn did not arrive at this pivotal opportunity by himself. In 1848, when his grandfather was growing up on a farm in the Mount Harmony community in McMinn County, Elizabeth Cady Stanton led a group of hundreds of women at the Seneca Falls Convention.

They demanded the right to vote and stated: “all men and women are created equal.” Stanton’s best friend was Susan B. Anthony, a fellow social reformer and suffragist. One year before Febb Burn was born, Anthony voted illegally in the 1872 election and was later convicted in court.

While Harry Burn worked as a railroader, Alice Paul and Sue Shelton White were jailed for protesting discrimination against women in front of the White House during World War I.

Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, worked for decades to organize lobbying campaigns and deliver speeches helping to win the vote for women across the country.

The culmination of the efforts of these women resulted in Tennessee being able to ratify the 19th Amendment. Harry Burn was fortunate to be able to play a small, but crucial role.

Despite what many books and newspapers have printed over the years, Burn was not chased by an angry mob of anti-suffragists after casting his deciding vote.

He fought back against accusations of bribery and told his colleagues on the house floor that “a mother’s advice is always safest for a boy to follow.”

The story of Burn’s deciding vote was reported on the front page of newspapers across the country.

Few people know that Burn’s political career did not end with his 1920 vote to ratify the 19th Amendment. His political career was just getting started.

After a close reelection in November 1920, Burn served a second term in the state house.

Afterwards, he moved to nearby Rockwood to practice law. In 1927, he moved to Sweetwater to open up his own firm with his junior partner: Winfred Earl Michael, nicknamed “W.E.”

The second floor of the Scruggs Building (New Block) housed Burn and Michael’s law offices. They had a great view of Main Street facing southwest. Hunter’s Café is now located below their former office space.

In 1930, at Michael’s urging, Burn made an unsuccessful run for governor of Tennessee. Michael served as his campaign manager and their law offices served as campaign headquarters.

During the city’s struggles in the Great Depression, Burn and Michael helped the city restructure its debt. After a decade practicing together, Burn and Michael split in 1936.

Harry Burn lived in a home on McCaslin Avenue and later lived in a room at the Hotel James Monroe before he moved back to his antebellum Niota home.

Burn married Ellen Cottrell in 1937 and the couple raised their son, Harry T. Burn, Jr., in the community. Ellen Burn briefly taught in Madisonville and later taught English at Sweetwater High School.

Burn once called Sweetwater “the best small town in America.”

In 1948, Burn won election to the state Senate in 1948, representing Monroe, McMinn, Bradley and Polk counties.

Due to some of Burn’s local legislation, he had a falling-out with W.E. Michael. Michael vehemently opposed Burn’s bills to ban the sale of beer in Sweetwater. Burn also caused controversy over his legislation to expand the city limits.

Burn secured successful legislation to improve the highways and build a new school in Sweetwater. After two terms in the state Senate, Burn left Sweetwater to work in Rockwood.

By the 1960s, Michael won election to the state legislature and practiced law with his late son, Van R. Michael, and later with J. Reid Dixon.

An examination of Burn’s life and career demonstrates that his impact on the lives of his fellow Tennesseans extends beyond his deciding vote to ratify the 19th Amendment.

Burn remained active in state politics until his death in 1977. He lies at rest in the Niota City Cemetery.

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Pardue House receives OK for National Register final review



Special to The Advocate & Democrat
Shown here is a historic photo of the Pardue house in Sweetwater.

One of the historic residences nestled within the City of Sweetwater is swiftly completing the required steps to becoming officially recognized on the National Register of Historic Places.

The James M. Pardue house of the City of Sweetwater was recently approved by the State Review Board of the Tennessee Historical Commission to submit the residence to the National Park Service for final review to be listed in the national register.

The meeting took place in Nashville on Jan. 24 where the Pardue house stood as one of six nominations presented to the

Historical Commission for review.

The house was noted for its architectural and local significance, having been built in 1896.

The property is currently surrounded by residential buildings and sits at the intersection of Price Street and Morris Street.

During the meeting, it was noted that the property held two features, with the first being the house itself and the second being a garage that was built in the 1980s and is considered to be non-contributing to the proposal.

Looking back at the history of the house, the residence was originally made



Special to The Advocate & Democrat
Shown here is a present day view of the Pardue house in Sweetwater.

to serve as a home for James and Rebecca Pardue in 1890 that featured unique architecture.

The current owner, Brent Miller, has owned the house since 2012 and has spent "significant" efforts in the building's restoration.

Miller is known as a local historian and has served on the city's Historic Zoning Commission with his work on preserving this property and researching its history being what lead to the house's nomination, according to a news release from the City of Sweetwater.

The National Register

criteria was met and certified in 2025 via an extensive application. The home is classified as an "excellent example of Folk Victorian architecture."

The home itself was designated as a contributing structure and has its original Heart of Pine siding, an original chimney, transom windows, wrap-around porch, banisters and bay windows, all of which are historically significant.

The board members unanimously agreed to pass the Pardue house to the next phase, allowing it to be presented to the National Parks Service for final review.

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SEE VILLAGE, Page 28



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Several historical markers provide view into Sweetwater's past

The City of Sweetwater is home to many historical markers denoting major events, ranging from specific buildings to areas of interest during the Civil War.

According to the Historical Marker Database, the City of Sweetwater has several historical markers placed throughout and near the town to provide the public with general information of the historical moments that took place at those locations.

Longstreet Encampment

One such marker is the Longstreet Encampment Marker that was placed by the Tennessee Historical Commission.

The marker is located at the intersection of South High Street and Williams Street. The marker features the following inscription:

"In the mid to late 1863, Sweetwater was a supply and staging area for the Confederacy. It was the last secure depot on the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad, south of the Union lines. In November 1863, General Longstreet, with 15,000 men, camped here for four days to provision, prior to his siege of Knoxville in early December 1863."

A second marker at the Sweetwater Depot expands on the information regarding Longstreet's time in the local area.

The Sweetwater Depot marker was placed by the Tennessee Civil War Trails and is located at the intersection of North Main Street and East Walnut Street.

The preface inscription on the marker states that on Nov. 4, 1863, Longstreet led two divisions from the city to attack Union General Ambrose E. Burnside's forces in Knoxville.

The marker goes into greater details about the confederate occupancy of the town of



Sweetwater, including more information about Longstreet as well.

Roughly six other markers are located around the Sweetwater area for their historical significance, including another at the Sweetwater Depot.

Sweetwater Depot

The next marker for Sweetwater is the Tennessee Overhill Experience From Furs to Factories marker that is located at the Sweetwater Depot.

The marker was placed by the Tennessee Department of Transportation along with other entities.

The marker details how the town's trading system evolved from its founding using the railroad to the incorporation of Interstate 75 for shipping goods.

John M. Jones

Leaping over to Mayes Avenue, north of West North Street, individuals will find the Captain John M. Jones, CSA marker that was placed in 1990 by the descendants and

friends of Jones.

The marker reads: "Soldier, Merchant, Farmer, Industrialist, Banker, Philanthropist and Caring Public Citizen." From there it lists the dates of Jones' life along with the dates for his wife and many children.

TN Military Institute

The next two markers share both a history and location as an education system. The first marker is for the Tennessee Military Institute that is located on U.S. 11, north of Old U.S. 11.

The marker was placed by the Tennessee Historical Commission and discusses the history of the military institute from its founding in 1874 until its closing.

TN Meiji Gakuin

Following that marker lies another for the Tennessee Meiji Gakuin High School, a Japanese school that took over the TMI building following its closure.

Tennessee Meiji Gakuin High School was open from 1989 until 2007 and was

founded on the Christian principle of service to mankind, according to the marker.

The marker can be found around the same area as the TMI marker.

Great Craighead Cave/ Lost Sea

The last two markers are outside of the City of Sweetwater but have had a historical impact on the Sweetwater community.

The two markers, the Great Craighead Cave and the Lost Sea Historical Marker, are located on the Lost Sea grounds near the City of Sweetwater.

The Great Craighead Cave marker was placed by the Tennessee Civil War Trails and explains the significance the site had on the civil war with the cave being a prime spot for ingredients to create gunpowder.

The final marker, the Lost Sea marker, was placed by the Tennessee Historical Commission and describes the Lost Sea along with its features.

Sweetwater First Assembly

*One hundred and fifty years!
Wow! Happy birthday Sweetwater!!!*

What began as a small number of families purchasing property and building homes has become a thriving small town that significantly impacts East Tennessee. Sweetwater has become a destination! Sweetwater has become a great place to live. Sweetwater has become a great place to recognize the beauty of God's creation, with the Cherohala Skyway on one side and Watts Bar Lake on the other.

Among the



many gifts to this community are the local churches. Regardless of your tradition or style, Sweetwater has a place you can

call home for your spiritual growth, development, and family. Sweetwater First Assembly is among those storied churches

where individuals take time each week to worship God and find inspiration through His Word.

Founded in 1971

by a small group of individuals near downtown Sweetwater, First Assembly has become a church that influences and

impacts not only the neighborhood but the nations. In scripture, Zechariah 4:10 in the New Living Translations says, "Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin..." Like our city, what began as a small group has turned into a large family of Christ-followers who gather together to serve God and make a difference in the community.

Sweetwater First Assembly has always strived to care for those in need and invest

SEE SFA, Page 24



Happy 150th Birthday!

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Sweetwater officials remember, celebrate High Point School

A historic institution was honored last year at Sweetwater High School.

High Point School was an all-black institution that drew students from all around the area to Sweetwater from the time it opened in the 1940s to the time it closed its doors in the 1970s.

That institution was honored at Sweetwater High School in a ceremony that included former students and teachers from High Point, as well as memorabilia of the school.

"This journey started for me years ago when I was a young coach growing up in Sweetwater," Monroe County Schools Secondary Supervisor Eric Weaver said.

He noted that the desire to inform the public more about Sweetwater's history came to him during a quarterback club meeting years ago in the same cafeteria where the ceremony was held. He said he was talking with someone when Sweetwater coaching legend King Berrong walked in and Weaver introduced him to everyone.

Weaver noted the person standing beside him turned to Weaver and said, "So that's who King Berrong is."

"He's heard of King Berrong, he's known of King Berrong, but he's never seen King Berrong," Weaver said. "That's when it dawned on me that we've got to start preserving this history moving forward to make sure the kids know it."

Weaver added that the histories of Sweetwater High and High Point are closely tied together.

"So many things have happened at SHS because

of High Point that people don't even realize," he said. "Not one person in this room would be here today if High Point didn't exist. We might still be in Sweetwater, but we'd be in a different capacity."

Weaver said this particular project of uncovering and preserving the history of High Point has been taken and run with by SHS student Maleah Jennings.

"Me and my peers have been researching High Point for a few months now," she said. "If I'm going to be honest with you, I didn't know much about High Point until we started this project. After I started speaking with some of the alumni, I quickly realized that without the students and staff, my peers and myself wouldn't have had such an amazing high school experience."

She then thanked the people who came before her for their contributions.

"It's been so incredible getting to know and to hear so many stories from the alumni right here in my city," she said. "That being said, I also heard the hardships. I'm so extremely blessed to say I will never have to face those same hardships in my lifetime because of their sacrifice."

The school was started by Virdell Latham in 1946, its first class graduated in 1951 and its last senior class graduated in 1964. The school closed permanently in the 1970s as a result of integration.

One of its students and teachers, Cleo Davis, was the honored guest at the event and physical education teacher Mike Martin, who was a student of hers, discussed her impact.

"It's a very special privilege to get to say a few words about her," Martin said. "It's easy to talk about good people and the influence she had over hundreds, if not thousands, of people."

Martin said that Davis made students feel comfortable in her class from the start.

"She was a momma figure and you knew that as soon as you walked in the room," Martin said. "She made sure morals, character and treating people right were just as important as academics."

He recalled an old saying and noted that he believes it was said because of her.

"She understood that kids don't care what you know until they know that you care," he said. "She's a product of High Point and that's the type of people that came out of it."

The keynote speaker for the event was Patrick Gaines, a former student at High Point who graduated from Sweetwater High School. Gaines is currently a member of the Sweetwater City School Board.

Gaines noted that he attended High Point for six years prior to the move to Sweetwater High School.

"I loved High Point," he said. "We were a family up there."

Gaines also discussed the historic importance High Point had on not just Sweetwater, but the entire area.

"Up to that point, black students in Monroe and Loudon counties had to commute to McMinn, Bradley and even Knox counties in order to complete their high school

education," he said.

The doors opened in 1947 as a result of Latham and his dream of having a high school for black students.

"During this time of segregation, black high school students from Madisonville, Loudon, Lenoir City and Philadelphia were required to commute to either High Point or J.L. Cook School in Athens," he explained. "A student from Lenoir City, in order to go to high school, they got on a bus every morning and came to Sweetwater or those who chose to go to J.L. Cook, they went to Athens. Sixty miles round trip each day. That's why Mr. Latham had a dream and the dream came true about having a black high school here in Sweetwater."

High Point started as grades 1 through 12, Gaines noted.

"The teachers were great — every one of them," he said. "They loved us, they cared for us, we were a High Point family."

The school was located on Patton Street in the west end of Sweetwater on a hill. He said after it closed, the building was vandalized and eventually torn down. Now a vacant lot sits there.

"A barren, empty lot is now the site where a great institution once stood," he said.

The teachers and coaches only had access to "used, hand-me-down" textbooks and sports equipment.

"We've had many successful people who were educated and walked through the hallowed halls of High Point," he said.

Grain Bin Commodities

Sweetwater has been an agricultural center for years. Grain Bin Commodities isn't just a bakery, we are a window into that part of the city's history.

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Come and visit us on the Holt Farm at 5209 Holt Road in Sweetwater. We are open Tuesday - Friday from 10am to 5pm, and Saturdays from 9 am to 2 pm. Enjoy our daily hot lunch specials like chicken & dumplings, or our own chicken salad or pimento cheese on fresh sourdough bread. We've got a seat for you on the patio, under the

bin, or in the barn.

Visit us for the Spring Barn Sale on 4/5, (We'll have 35+ local makers and growers) Praise on the Porch 4/12, Sunflower Days in June, and Date Nights or Ladies Nights with smore's and more throughout the year.

Summer brings wildflower picking, and painting and flower arranging classes along with games on the lawn or feeding the Highland Cows and Babydoll Sheep. During Autumn, we invite you to the Fall Barn Sale on 9/13, (Local Vendors) and Praise at the Maze on 9/20 which is also the start of Fall at the Farm, this includes our corn maze, pumpkin patch, corn pit, games & more every weekend through October. You're always invited to stay and play at the farm in one

SEE GRAIN, Page 26












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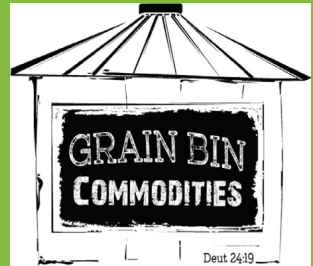
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Sweetwater Institute of Cosmetology

Carrying on a Legacy of Beauty and Education



Misty Piña



Linda Jenkins

Founded in 2013 by Misty Piña, Sweetwater Institute of Cosmetology stands as a testament to perseverance and passion.

Misty's journey began in 2002 when, after being laid off from her factory job, she enrolled in cosmetology school. That school, once known as the East Tennessee School of Beauty and founded by Linda Jenkins in 1993, was located in the very same building Sweetwater Institute calls home today.

After graduating, Misty began her career at The M Salon in Vonore. By 2006, she became the proud owner of the salon, and seven years later, she opened Sweetwater Institute of Cosmetology, carrying forward a legacy of beauty, education, and community impact in Sweetwater.

Over the past 11 years, we have proudly graduated over 700 students, equipping them with the skills and confidence to thrive in the beauty industry. Today, we offer Cosmetology and Nail Tech programs that combine hands-on experience with a commitment to high-quality, affordable education.

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High Point memorial placed at Sweetwater High School

Sweetwater High School is home to a memorial for High Point High School, in remembrance of the institution it integrated with nearly 60 years ago.

The memorial is placed in honor of the past the two schools share and to inform future generations of the Sweetwater community.

High Point High School was an all black school that hosted students from a variety of different locations, such as Madisonville, Tellico, Sweetwater and more.

The school remained in place until integration merged High Point High with Sweetwater High School about 59 years ago.

"We believe the schools integrated around 1964 because the first season they played football was 1965 and it was the first undefeated season in school history here at Sweetwater," Monroe County Schools 9-12 Curriculum & Instruction Director; Community & Industry Outreach Eric Weaver said. "I have been told by multiple people that our school had no issues after the integration. In my opinion, it was a perfect union in the City of Sweetwater."

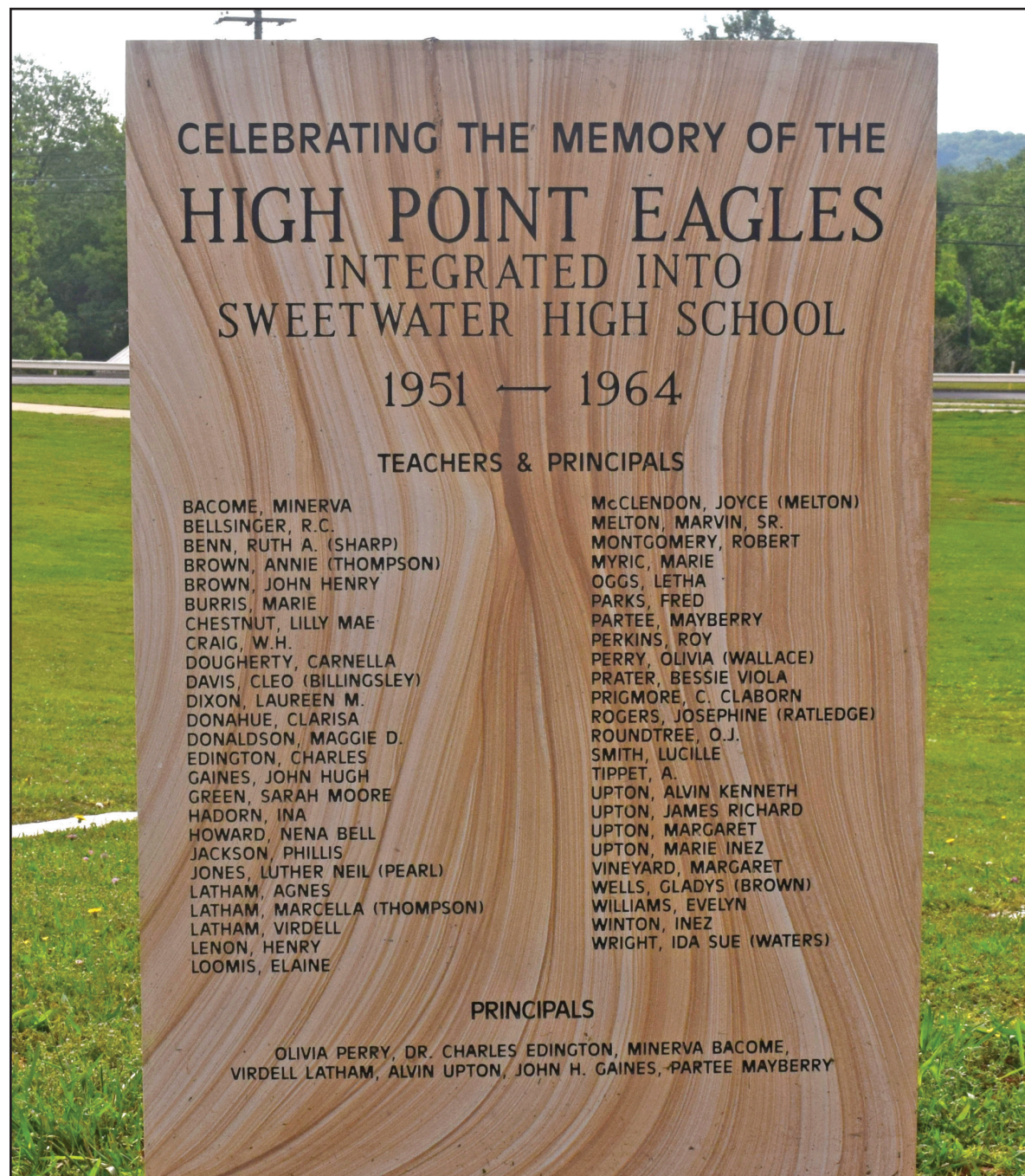
Weaver believes the lack of tension following the integration was due to everyone already having a sense of community built prior to the merger.

"We already had established relationships," Weaver expressed.

"Just look at the community the way it is now and the way it has been," Physical Education teacher Mike Martin added. "I believe it brought unity to Sweetwater."

Weaver hopes the memorial will help educate both the Sweetwater community and his students on local history.

"We are all about education



at Sweetwater High School and we want to educate our students about community and the knowledge and history of anything in their lives," Weaver expressed. "When we lose that grip on tradition and history then the children aren't going to be willing to learn. It's more impactful when you can show them something along with someone who participat-

ed rather than just explain it."

"I want to thank Monroe County Schools Director Dr. Kristi Windsor for helping me acquire this memorial for the school," Weaver added.

Cleo Davis, who was both a student of High Point and later a teacher at there, reflected on her time at the school while viewing the memorial.

"To go back and work at

the school you attended really means a lot," she expressed.

"I've enjoyed my teaching career all of these years. I taught there for about four or five years then I transferred to Sweetwater Elementary School ... there are a lot of good memories there. This is a beautiful memorial. I didn't expect anything like this and it is very special."

Valley Building Supply

A Legacy of Service and Community Support

From a Family-Owned Business to a Community Pillar

In 1994, the Dacus family embarked on a journey that would see Valley Building Supply become a trusted name in the industry. With a focus on customer satisfaction and quality products, they quickly built a reputation for reliability and excellence. The initial years were marked by hard work and dedication. With the Dacus family personally overseeing operations to ensure that every customer receives the best possible service, this family-owned business has grown from a humble beginning into a thriving enterprise, all while maintaining its commitment to high-quality service and community engagement. The Valley Team has grown from 5 to 50 in the past 30+ years. Valley has been a place for first jobs, careers and post career jobs with hands on knowledge in a positive team environment cultivated over the years. Under the leadership of DeLane Dacus, Jason Dacus, and Jeff Cunningham the



company has not only provided essential building materials and services to countless customers but has also become an active participant in various community support programs.

As the years went by, Valley Building

Supply expanded its offerings to include a wide range of building materials, tools, and services. This growth was driven by a deep understanding of the needs

SEE VALLEY, Page 24

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Continued from Page 15



in the next generation. In 2024, that focus continued with a brand-new Student Center. This facility was built with our community in mind. It is a place where the next generation can build community and grow in their faith while being in a safe place. This next generation, like the generation prior, are not only tomorrow's world changers but today's leaders.

As we join our community in celebrating 150 years, we recommit ourselves to being a place of hope, healing, and strength for our Sweetwater! Regardless of where one finds themselves in their journey of life, Sweetwater First Assembly is a place where they can discover their place in the family of God, to develop their unique giftings to impact our community, and to deploy world changers around the world!

Happy birthday, Sweetwater! We love you.



Valley

Continued from Page 23

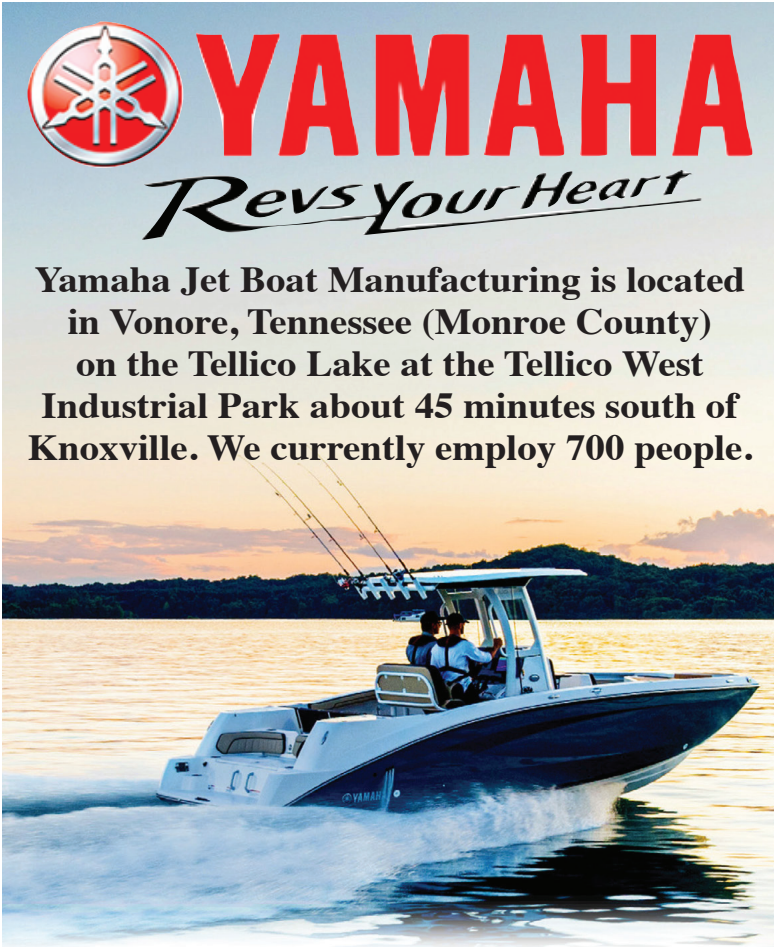


of builders, contractors, and homeowners alike. Today, Valley Building Supply stands as a one-stop-shop for all building and construction needs, providing everything from lumber and hardware to expert advice and support. Valley Building Supply values and assists customers in building and maintaining their biggest investment, their home.

One of the defining features of Valley Building Supply is its unwavering commitment to supporting the community. The Dacus family has always believed in giving back, and this philosophy is deeply ingrained in the company's operations. Over the years, Valley Building Supply has been involved in numerous community support initiatives, reflecting its dedication to making a positive impact. Valley has partnered and supported multiple organizations including: Sweetwater Area Ministries, Sweetwater City School PTO, Various High School Sports Programs, Dixie Youth Baseball, Salt & Light Studios, True Purpose, SMPOA, Kiwanis Club, SVCA and other similar organizations.

Valley Building Supply is more than just a business; it is a vital part of the community fabric. As the Team looks to the future, the Dacus family remains committed to the principles that have guided the company since its founding. With a focus on quality, customer service, and community engagement, Valley Building Supply is poised to continue its legacy of excellence. The company plans to expand its offers further, incorporating new technologies and innovations to better serve its customers.





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Grain

Continued from Page 17



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Veterinary Piano Concert

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JULY 19, 2025

Sweetwater Derby
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JULY 26, 2025

Fairest of the Fair Pageant

SEPTEMBER 18-21, 2025

Sweetwater Fair

NOVEMBER 8 2025

Veterans Day Parade

NOVEMBER 2025

150th Musical

DECEMBER 8, 2025

Candlelight Ceremony



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Cup Runneth Over Coffee House

A Dream Brewed in Faith

Seven years ago, Cup Runneth Over Coffee House was nothing more than a God-sized dream in the heart of its owner, Kendra Moreau. At the time, she was searching for her true purpose when she felt God speak clearly to her: coffee shop. It wasn't just about serving coffee—it was about creating a place of hope and encouragement in a world that desperately needed it.

Kendra believed that coffee was simply the vehicle, but the true mission was the connection, conversation, and community that happened over every cup.

Today, Cup Runneth Over is celebrating seven years of serving its community while also joining in the excitement of Sweetwater's 150th birthday!

Located in downtown Sweetwater's historic Main

Street district, the coffee shop resides in a charming 1850s building, rich with history and character. Kendra feels blessed to serve her community from what Sweetwater lovingly calls the sweetest street in Tennessee.

When she first surrendered to God's calling for the coffee shop, Kendra shared her vision with a dear friend, Melanie DeCante. While the timing wasn't right for Melanie to join the venture at the beginning, God's plans are always perfect. This past year, everything aligned, and Melanie was able to bring her Miracle Cookie Company into Cup Runneth Over, baking fresh, delicious treats for the in-house bakery. Her addition has been a blessing, further deepening the sense of faith and friendship that makes the coffee shop so

SEE COFFEE, Page 28



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The Miracle Cookie Company

Coffee

Continued from Page 27

special.

As Sweetwater marks 150 years, Kendra and her team are honored to be part of such a vibrant, welcoming community. They cherish the relationships built over the years and the countless stories shared over coffee.

Looking ahead, they are excited to continue serving, growing, and being a light in their beloved town.

Whether a longtime sup-

porter or a first-time visitor, Cup Runneth Over Coffee House welcomes everyone with open arms, a warm cup, and a place to belong. Here's to Sweetwater's 150th, to seven years of faith and fellowship, and to many more years of coffee and community!

*With gratitude,
Cup Runneth Over Coffee
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Company*



Village

Continued from Page 13

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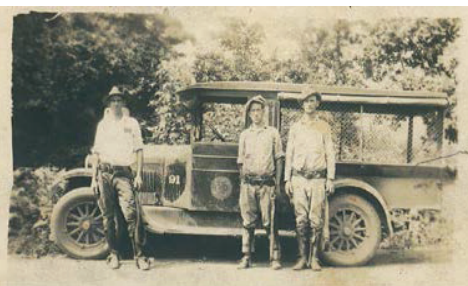
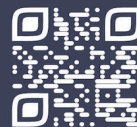
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The Lost Sea

A Living History

If you have been to the Lost Sea numerous times you may think that nothing changes. You go inside the cave, and you see the same formations, the lake looks pretty much the same. The trails may be a little different and the lake level may change at times. But overall, you probably think that the cave stays the same. Let me tell you a secret, it doesn't.

The cave is actually a living, breathing entity. It changes constantly. Can we see the changes? Not always. Rock, water and time make the cave what it is today. The cave is mostly made up of limestone rock, so it is very soluble. Water flowing over the rocks causes different formations within the cave. Stalactites and Stalagmites are constantly changing. It may be that we can't always see the changes, but they are constantly happening. It just takes time.

There is so much history within the walls of the cave. If you listen closely you can almost hear Civil War soldiers mining the dirt inside the cave. The nitrate in the dirt was used to make gun powder during the Civil War. You may also hear Cherokee Indians inside the cave holding tribal meetings and protecting themselves from the elements. The cave is a constant 58 degrees F. So, it is warm in the winter and cool in the summer. You will surely hear people moving inside the cave. A thirteen-year-old boy named Ben Sands discovered The Lost Sea, 140 feet below the ground level, he did this with only the light from his lantern. Through the years the cave was used for growing mushrooms, supplying a

fall-out shelter and even an underground bar called the Cavern Tavern.

Since opening as an attraction in 1965 the Lost Sea has seen millions of visitors. It is a go-to spot for so many people in the area. School groups and families visit time and time again. Visitors from all over the world have experienced the beauty of the cave and our underground lake, the largest underground lake in America.

Over the years the Lost Sea has employed thousands of people. It has always been a favorite summer job for high school and college students and even a few who have stayed and worked full-time for many years.

The Lost Sea is a living history and a natural wonder that we are so fortunate to have in our area. It always leaves me wondering what else may be underground that we don't even know about.





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