

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN BOBBITT 1828 - 1899
Son of James and Mary Bobbitt

Benjamin Franklin Bobbitt was born on November 6, 1828 in Rutherford County, Tennessee. He was the ninth child and sixth son of James and Mary (Gunn) Bobbitt. He was the last child to be born in Rutherford County, and two years later moved with the family to Gibson County where he lived his entire life.

The Bobbitt family arrived in Gibson County in 1830. Later they were joined by more Bobbitt families who were descendants of James Bobbitt, son of William and Susannah (James) Bobbitt. Sometime during the period between 1830 and 1845, the area of present day Dyer, Tennessee was called Bobbittville. The town originally was laid off on lands of Benjamin Franklin Bobbitt. When the railroad came through Gibson County, the name was changed to Dyer Station to promote its location as a shipping point for neighboring Dyer County. In 1899 the town was incorporated as Dyer, Tennessee.

The first post-office of Dyer was opened on January 8, 1860 in the General Merchandise Store of Berry and Bobbitt with Benjamin F. Bobbitt as the first postmaster.

On February 15, 1850, Benjamin Bobbitt married Martha Ann Dinwiddie. She was a daughter of J and M. Dinwiddie. Martha was born on December 7, 1831. The couple had one daughter who was born on December 4, 1850, and named Mary E. Bobbitt. Mary died on February 8, 1851, just a short time after the death of her mother on December 22, 1850.

Benjamin Bobbitt selected for his second wife a Mary Elizabeth Berry. The couple were married on December 27, 1854 at Dyer. She was the daughter of John Campbell Berry and Nancy Ramsey Berry, and a sister to James L. Berry.

In 1858, James L. Berry and Benjamin Bobbitt erected the first store building on what was then the Benjamin Bobbitt farm.

When the war between the states began, Benjamin Bobbitt and James Berry both volunteered to serve the army of the Confederate States of America and served in the 47th Tennessee Infantry. They were both in the battle of Shilo. Benjamin Bobbitt was captured at Kennesaw Mountain and was taken a prisoner of war to a camp in Chicago, Illinois.

After the war, Benjamin Bobbitt returned to farming and became an expert in the raising of strawberries. He became associated with the fruit box factory at Dyer. In 1891 he invented an apparatus for making strawberry baskets that greatly improved the packing and shipping of fresh strawberries.

Benjamin Franklin Bobbitt had no children of his own to survive him. He and his wife Mary (Berry) Bobbitt reared six children who were orphaned and all the children were a testimony to their love and care. Four of these children were the nieces and a nephew of Benjamin Bobbitt, children of his brother James. Two of the children were a niece and nephew of Mary (Berry) Bobbitt, children of John Whitney Norton and his wife Tennessee (Berry) Norton. The children were Tennie Norton and Norman Campbell Norton.

Benjamin Bobbitt's history and contribution to Gibson County was written in the book by Frederick M. Culp and Mrs. Robert E. Ross, called "Gibson County Past and Present". The book was published by the Gibson County Historical Society at Trenton, Tennessee, in 1961.

On Saturday, June 3, 1899, the first municipal election was held at Dyer. Benjamin Franklin Bobbitt was one of the judges. The next day, Benjamin Bobbitt suffered a heart attack and after a brief illness, died on July 2, 1899. He was buried in the Bobbitt Cemetery at Dyer.

Mary Elizabeth (Berry) Bobbitt suffered a stroke and was attended by one of the children she reared, Tinnie Norton, a niece. Mary Bobbitt died on November 6, 1903 and was buried in the Bobbitt Cemetery at Dyer.