

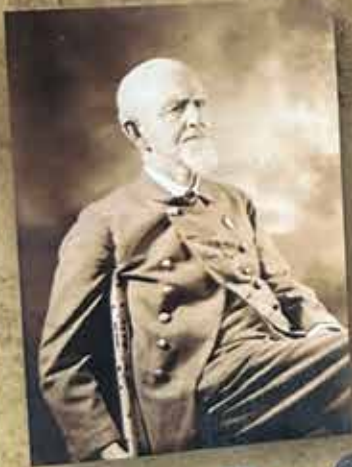
# Muletown {local}

COLUMBIA & MAURY COUNTY

MAY 2025

## LOOKING BACK *at* CULLEOKA

*A pictorial history of Culleoka, Tennessee and  
surrounding communities*



*Articles & Captions  
by Adam Southern*

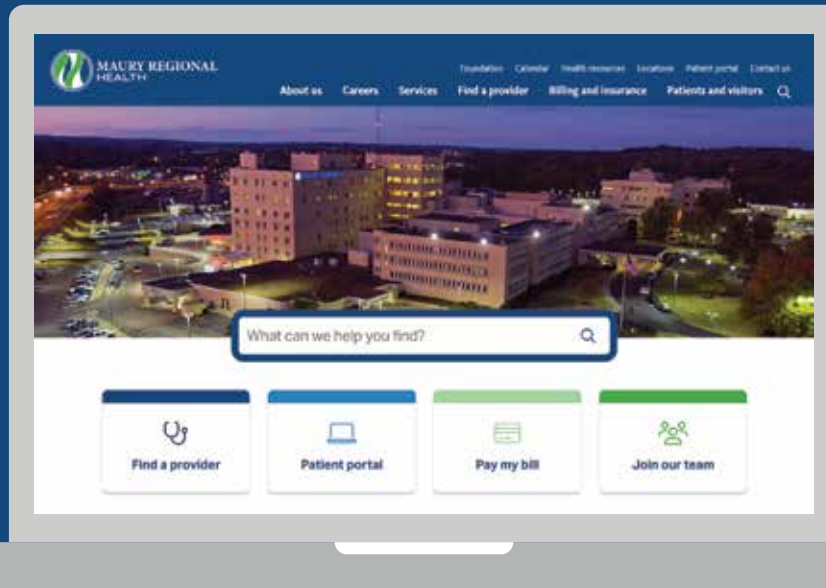
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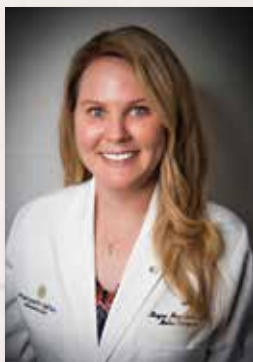
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# Inside {local} May '25

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## BOOK HONORS CULLEOKA

Highlighting the history  
of a Maury County  
community

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**ON THE COVER** Adam Southern's latest book, "Looking Back at Culleoka," is full of photos and fascinating stories about some of the ways the community made its mark on history.

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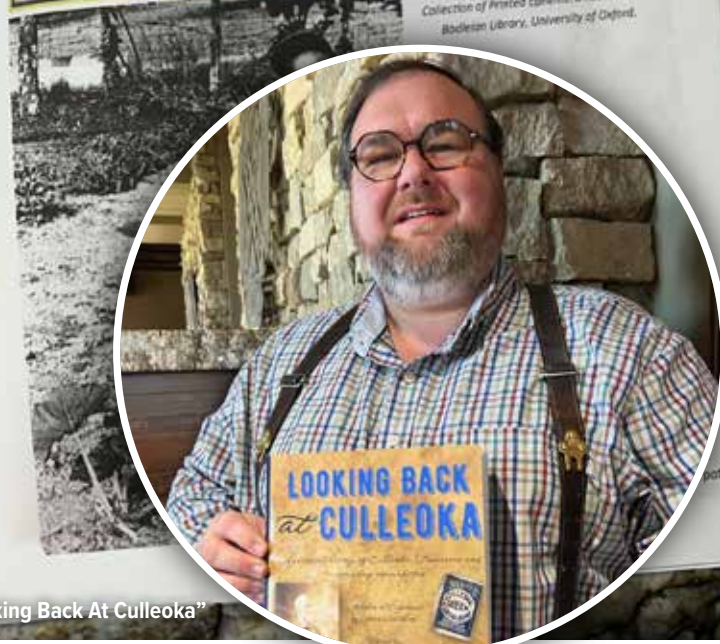
  



Cantaloupes from the largest in the lore of Culleoka. The Culleoka Produce Company office is shown above the horse in the image above; over the back of the wagon, it can be read "Smith Bros." on the glass store window. This was the same business as "M. S. Smith."



Above, two labels discovered in the John Johnson Collection of Printed ephemera housed at the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.



Adam Southern, author of "Looking Back At Culleoka"



The heyday of "Culleoka Cantaloupes" were from 1907 to 1935, but in the years that followed, many people still continued to grow melons around Culleoka, like Berney Hobbs, Jr. shown above with some of his harvest.

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# A JOURNEY INTO THE PAST

## PAM WINDSOR

Whether he's writing books, speaking to local groups, or leading a ghost or cemetery tour, Adam Southern is always highlighting Maury County's unique and storied past.

His latest book focuses on the small community of Culleoka.

Titled "Looking Back at Culleoka," it's full of photos and fascinating stories about some of the ways it made its mark on history through the years.

"I grew up here," Southern says. "And right now if you drive through Culleoka and you blink, you miss it. It's a store and a post office; we don't even have a stoplight. But at one time, this was a thriving little community."

He was in the seventh grade when he got his introduction to

what made this area of Maury County so special.

"I had a teacher named Jane McNaron, who taught a class on Culleoka history," he says. "If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't have ever found an interest in local history. So, this book is kind of a nod to her."

He spent two years going through local archives and family collections, looking for photos, archives, and personal accounts of some of the things he'd heard about through the years. At one time, Culleoka was home to a well-known school now located in Belt Buckle. A famous Tennessee senator got his start as a school-teacher here, and it was once known for a particular fruit.

"The Culleoka Cantaloupe really put the town on the map," Southern says. "The brothers who came up with the Culleoka

**PAGE 10 >**



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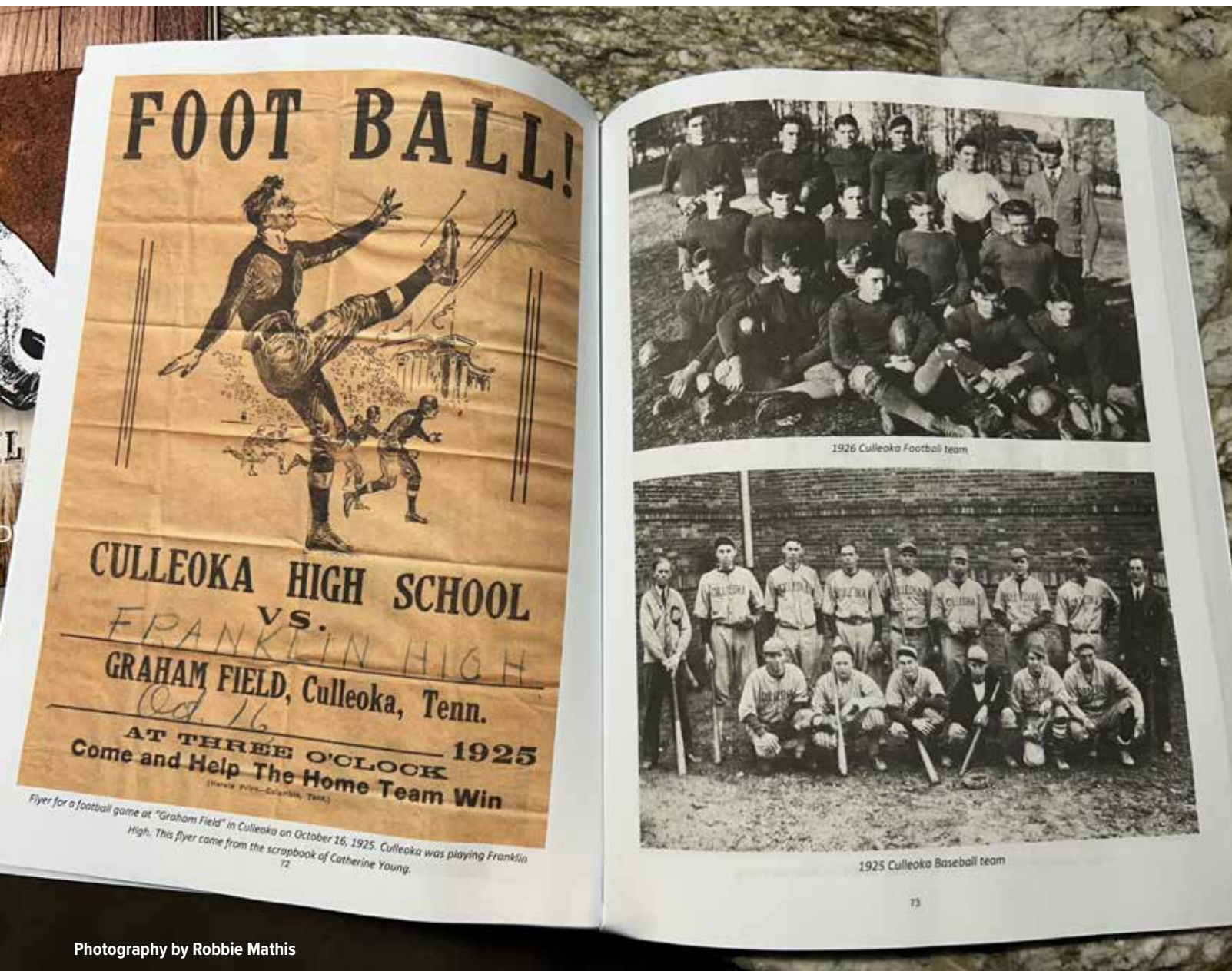
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Photography by Robbie Mathis

## < FROM PAGE 8

Cantaloupes were great marketers. They started giving their cantaloupes to the L&N passenger cars that came through town. They said, hey, let's serve them to every guest on the train. When you serve them a meal, give them a cantaloupe. It really got their product in front of consumers."

Those cantaloupes were known so far and wide, Southern actually found items with their logo as far away as Europe.

"We found shipping labels in the collection of the University of Oxford in England," he explains. "So, this book really has been an international effort. That was the biggest shock to me from this entire project."

Other interesting bits of history include the origin of Culleoka's name. It's a Native American word for sweet water, given the area's many springs. Tennessee Congressman Percy Priest got his start as a schoolteacher in Culleoka. And the Webb School, which even-

tually moved to Belt Buckle, Tennessee got its start in this small community. It ended up moving over a disagreement between local merchants selling alcohol to some of the school students, and William "Sawney" Webb taking great measures to make them stop.

Southern thoroughly enjoyed putting "Looking Back at Culleoka" together.

"I like telling stories using pictures," he says. "They're a helpful tool in showing how things used to be. We have photos showing buildings that are no longer there, schools that have come and gone, people who've come through town, lived there, and since passed. There are around 500 images along with written history, so even if you're not from Culleoka, I think you'll take something away from it."

*The book is available at local stores in Columbia, on Amazon, or Southern's website at [adamsouthern.com/](http://adamsouthern.com/).*





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# COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS



Photo by Ashley Slaughter

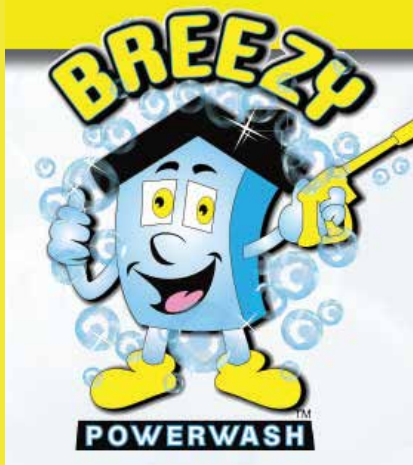
## MR. BASKETBALL

Santa Fe Wildcat senior Auden Slaughter was recently named TSSAA Class 1A Mr. Basketball on the campus of Middle TN State University. During his high school tenure, he averaged 31.1 points, and 8.1 rebounds per game. He ranks #3 in state history all-time career points with 3,587. Auden has signed to play this fall with the Vol State Pioneers in Gallatin.



## CELEBRATING NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Compassus Hospice of Columbia celebrated National Volunteer Week, April 20 - 26. Mayor Chaz Molder signed the Mayoral Proclamation honoring volunteers (L to R: Carrie Meehan, Volunteer Coordinator with Compassus, Reya Almeida-Gray, Volunteer with Compassus, and Mayor Molder), the second photo has the group of our volunteers at our celebratory luncheon (L to R, back row: Dave McGovern, Gregg Conroy, Reya Almeida-Gray, Nell Belew, Becky Gengler, Ray Turner, Emily Kelso, John Peters, Shirley Dahlberg, Annette Hadley, Alan Winship, L to R, kneeling: Todd Hensel, and Carrie Meehan, Volunteer Coordinator).



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Michael Johnson, Daniel Pollard, Rick Whitley, & Wes Ricketts of Jones and Lang. Photography by Robbie Mathis

# THE LOOK OF A WINNER SINCE 1966

## JASON ZASKY

Since 1966, Jones & Lang Sporting Goods has been serving the needs of Columbia's sports community, as well as the needs of surrounding communities. Most notably, perhaps, is that much of its staff/ownership has been on hand for the majority of that six-decade time frame.

"Rick Whitley and I have both been here for 36 years. I started working here while I was in college, and Rick started right after he graduated from college," begins co-owner Daniel Pollard, speaking about one of three other co-owners, the other two being Wes Ricketts and Michael Johnson, the latter a grandson of Jones & Lang's founder.

"The four of us purchased the store in 2010 from Michael's father and uncle. We have been fortunate and blessed to stay around as long as we have," he continues, before turning the conversation to the mission of Jones & Lang, which has long been guided by the motto "The Look of a Winner."

"We take care of the uniform and apparel needs of teams, schools, organizations, and businesses, and we sell sporting goods equipment across a wide range of sports, including football, baseball, softball, soccer, basketball, and volleyball," offers Pollard, who regards college football as his favorite sport, but enjoys watching and attending most any sporting event.

"We focus primarily on taking care of local schools and youth

**PAGE 26 >**



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## < FROM PAGE 24

recreational organizations, supplying them with their uniforms. We also have a lot of corporate accounts, supplying companies with the polos and T-shirts they need for their employees. We also do embroidery in-house, we do silk screening in-house, and we have a trophy & awards department,” he continues, explaining the company’s offerings in more detail.

As for what has enabled the business to thrive for almost six decades, Pollard highlights Jones & Lang’s commitment to personal service and its dedication to the local community.

“I think our customer service and community involvement has enabled us to stay in business all these years,” he says. The move to Neely’s Mill shopping center—which occurred some years back—has also been a positive.

“We had outgrown our previous location and were fortunate enough to get a great opportunity to increase our space, not only for our showroom but also our production area. Now we have about 10,000 square feet of space,” notes Pollard.

It helps, too, that Jones & Lang generates business from growing communities throughout Middle Tennessee, including Spring Hill, Mt. Pleasant, Hohenwald, Pulaski, and Lawrenceburg, among others.

“There are a lot of surrounding cities and counties that rely on

us to take care of them,” he continues.

Meanwhile, Jones & Lang takes care to reciprocate by supporting local schools and teams in ways large and small.

“We sponsor local organizations and help them out by putting banners in gymnasiums and on fences in the ballparks. We try to give back to those organizations and schools that are loyal to us and good customers of ours,” continues Pollard, who says he and his fellow employees—a dozen in all—appreciate their work as much as ever.

“We all enjoy helping take care of our customers’ needs, but it’s especially nice when you see the look on kids’ faces when they get new uniforms, and how it makes them feel when they are able to take the field with nice-looking apparel,” he says.

As for whether the company will have a blowout celebration for its 60th anniversary in 2026, Pollard says it’s too soon to tell.

“We did a huge celebration for our 50th anniversary, and the past ten years have flown by. It’s kind of a surprise to look up and say, ‘We’ve got 60 coming up next year,’” he concludes. “I don’t know that we have anything planned for the 60th.”

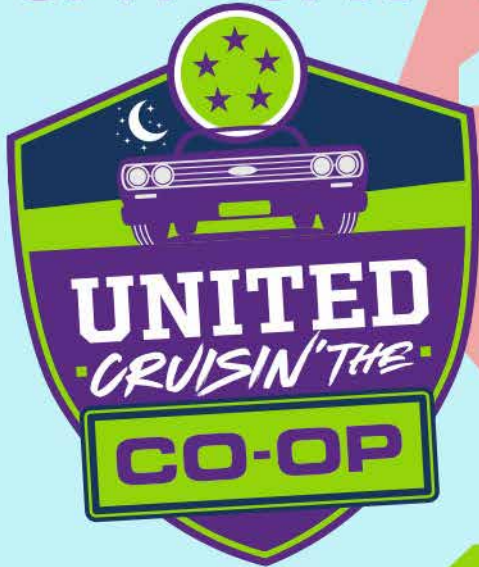
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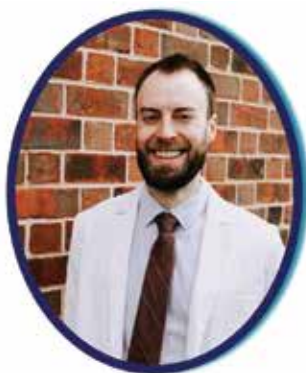
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