Tennessee Blue Book: Student Edition

A History of Tennessee

Chapter 1: The Land and Native People

Tennessee has a great variety of rivers, landforms, climate regions, and plant and animal species. Numerous groups of people have settled in Tennessee beginning with Native Americans about 12,000 years ago. The lasting impact of Native Americans can be seen in the number of places with Native American names. In fact, the name “Tennessee” comes from the Native American word “Tanasi.” Settlers came to Tennessee to take advantage of its abundant natural resources, so it seems fitting to begin by describing the land of Tennessee.

Tennessee divides naturally into three “grand divisions:” East Tennessee, Middle Tennessee, and West Tennessee. East Tennessee is an upland, often mountainous region. Middle Tennessee has foothills surrounding a lowland area known as a basin. The land of West Tennessee is part of the Gulf Coastal Plain. Travelers coming to the state from the east first encounter the towering Unaka and Smoky Mountains, followed by the Great Valley of East Tennessee. Moving across the Valley floor, they next face the Cumberland Plateau, which historically attracted little settlement and presented a barrier to westward migration. West of the Plateau, the terrain descends into the Central Basin of Middle Tennessee—a rolling, fertile countryside that drew hunters and settlers alike. The Central Basin is surrounded on all sides by the Highland Rim—the western ridge of which drops into the Tennessee River Valley. Across the river in West Tennessee begin the low hills and alluvial plain. An alluvial plain is formed from deposits of gravel, clay, and sand carried by a river. These geographical “grand divisions” correspond to the distinctive political and economic cultures of the state’s three regions.

Tennessee possesses a climate favorable for people and agriculture, with abundant rainfall and mild temperatures which create a long growing season for plants. The
area is generally free from the long droughts and freezes found in some regions of the United States. The three major rivers that flow around and across Tennessee—the Mississippi, Tennessee, and Cumberland Rivers—have created watersheds that cover most of the state. A watershed is an area of land drained by a particular river or stream. The Tennessee River forms near Knoxville and flows in a southwesterly direction into Alabama, then loops back north to the Kentucky border. The Cumberland River drains northern Middle Tennessee, and West Tennessee is covered by a network of slow-moving streams, swamps, and lakes that flow directly into the Mississippi River. These rivers and the smaller streams that feed into them
have played a significant role from the earliest times by providing fish and shellfish, by serving as major transportation routes, and by creating the areas of fertile soils that attracted farmers.

Fossils found in rocks across Tennessee show that the state was covered by warm, shallow seas in the distant past. Coal-bearing layers of rock are found throughout the Cumberland Plateau. Plant and dinosaur fossils are found in the sandstones of West Tennessee. Mammoths, mastodons, and giant sloths were driven south by the advancing glaciers of the Ice Age. Their remains can be found in West and Middle Tennessee.

The story of man in Tennessee begins with the last retreat of the Ice Age glaciers, when a colder climate and forests of spruce and fir covered the region. Late Ice Age hunters probably followed animal herds into this area about 12,000–15,000 years ago. These nomadic Paleo-Indians camped in caves and rock shelters and left behind their distinctive arrowheads and spear points. They may have used such Paleolithic or Stone Age tools to hunt the mastodon and caribou that lived in eastern Tennessee. About 12,000 years ago, the region’s climate began to warm, and the vegetation changed from being mostly conifers to our modern deciduous forest. Large numbers of deer and elk were attracted to the abundant supply of mast, or food produced by oak, hickory, chestnut, and beech trees. Warmer climate, the extinction of the large Ice Age mammals, and the spread of deciduous forests worked together to transform Native American society.

During what is known as the Archaic period, descendants of the Paleo-Indians began to settle on river terraces. River terraces are areas of flat land raised above the valley floor. Archaic people gathered wild plant food and shellfish in addition to hunting game. Sometime between 3000 and 900 BC, natives took the crucial step of growing edible plants such as squash and gourds—the beginning of agriculture. Growing crops provided Archaic people with a dependable food supply and freed them from seasonal shortages of wild plant foods and game. With a more secure food supply, populations grew rapidly and scattered groups combined to form larger villages.

The next major stage of Tennessee prehistory lasted almost 2,000 years and is
known as the Woodland period. During this era, Native people began to make containers and other objects out of clay. This craft is known as pottery. They also began to live in settled farming communities and to construct burial mounds. Wealth increased and Native society began to stratify, or divide, into different social classes. Native Americans in Tennessee made the transition from societies of hunters and gatherers to well-organized tribal, agricultural societies living in large, permanent towns.

The peak of prehistoric cultural development in Tennessee occurred during the Mississippian period (900–1600 AD). Population grew after the introduction of new varieties of corn and beans. As chieftains became more powerful, territorial warfare increased and ceremonial temples and public structures were built. The complexity of Mississippian society is seen in the elaborate pottery styles and personal items, such as combs, pipes, and jewelry, it produced.

People who do not have their own written language are often forgotten or known mostly from the documents written by their conquerors. This is what happened to the native inhabitants of Tennessee. Most of what is known about their culture comes from the writings of European Americans who often viewed Native American culture as inferior to their own culture. Disease, warfare, and the European fur trade had transformed Native American society long before white settlement reached the Tennessee country.

The Cherokee were not the first inhabitants of East Tennessee. Archeological evidence shows that East Tennessee had densely populated native communities prior to European contact. Native Americans in Tennessee began to grow maize, or corn, around 800–1000 AD. This development allowed towns and villages to grow rapidly. During the Mississippian period, organized chiefdoms developed in population centers such as Pinson Mounds in the west, Mound Bottom in Middle Tennessee, and Toqua and Citico in East Tennessee. In 1540–1542, Hernando DeSoto led a group of 600 conquistadors, or Spanish soldiers, through the mountains into East Tennessee where he encountered the remnants of this civilization.
Spanish entradas, or exploratory expeditions, led by DeSoto, Tristan de Luna, and Juan Pardo, came through the region between 1540 and 1567.

When the English and French began to explore the region 150 years later, the densely populated valleys and towns that DeSoto had found were gone or deserted. Historians are not certain what happened to these early inhabitants. The most likely explanation is that the Native Americans were wiped out by diseases such as smallpox and measles carried by the Spanish. Because Native Americans had never been exposed to European diseases, they had no natural resistance, or immunity, to the diseases. The introduction of European diseases to North and South America was one aspect of the Columbian Exchange. The Columbian Exchange refers to the exchanges of plants, animals, diseases, and technology between the Old World (Europe, Africa, and Asia) and the New World (North and South America) following Columbus's voyage in 1492.

Some of the indigenous or native peoples, such as the Yuchi, remained, but they were driven out in the early eighteenth century by the Cherokee, who apparently migrated into the region after it was emptied by disease. There is evidence of a large-scale massacre at the Yuchi town of Chestowee in 1714. Cherokee hostility probably caused the Yuchi to abandon eastern Tennessee and settle further south in Georgia. The Yuchi people were one of the early tribes of eastern Tennessee. “Tanasi,” which gave its name to the state, may have originally been a Yuchi word, as was “Hogohegee,” the name given to the Tennessee River on many eighteenth-century maps.

The arrival of French explorers and Virginian traders in the mid-1600s marked the beginning of the end of Tennessee’s native culture. For the next hundred years, the trade in deer and beaver pelts was the main connection between European Americans and Native Americans. From the western reaches of Virginia and the Carolinas into what would be known as Tennessee, the Cherokee ruled, having earlier driven the Creek, Yuchi, and Shawnee from the region. They were the last native group to actually live in part of Tennessee. The colonial fur trade would change the Cherokee way of life forever. The system made the Cherokee dependent on European trade goods and led to the overhunting of game. At the same time, trade greatly increased intertribal warfare. It also drew the Cherokee into European wars, such as the French and Indian War at the end of the eighteenth century. Soon, Europeans would come seeking land, not deerskins, from the Native Americans.
New tribes moved into the Tennessee region after DeSoto’s visit. The Cherokee built their towns and villages along the Hiwassee and Little Tennessee Rivers. The Chickasaw Nation controlled the territory west of the Tennessee River. The Shawnee, a large Ohio Valley tribe, moved south into the Cumberland River area but were driven out by Chickasaw and Cherokee attacks. After 1715, Middle Tennessee had no Indian towns, although several tribes used it as a common hunting ground.

In 1673, both British and French explorers claimed the region. James Needham and Gabriel Arthur, British traders from Charles Town (later Charleston), South Carolina, crossed the Appalachians to establish trade with the Cherokee. Father Jacques Marquette and fur trader Louis Joliet came down the Mississippi River and claimed its entire valley for the King of France. Britain and France later built forts and trading posts in the region to reinforce their competing claims.

The early fur traders lived among the Indians and employed Indian hunters to supply them with beaver skins and deer pelts, or skins. The furs were then shipped downriver to New Orleans or carried on pack trains to Charles Town. Pack trains were lines of horses or mules that carried goods on their backs across the mountains. South Carolina merchants dominated the early Tennessee fur trade. In 1748, they exported more than 160,000 skins worth $250,000. In return for furs, Indians received cloth, iron goods, and guns. The fur trade was profitable for the traders, but it wiped out
much of Tennessee’s native animal life. As the British and French competed for control of the valuable fur trade, they negotiated trade agreements and military alliances with Indian tribes. A **military alliance** is an agreement between two groups to assist each other in war.

The competition between France and Britain for control of North America led to the start of the **French and Indian War** in 1754. Both the British and the French needed the help of their Native American allies in fighting the war. English soldiers built **Fort Loudoun** near present-day Vonore in an effort to keep the Cherokee loyal. However, the plan did not work. Cherokee warriors laid siege or surrounded the fort and starved out the soldiers inside. After surrendering the fort, the retreating soldiers were attacked by the Cherokee, and many soldiers were killed. The British eventually won the war despite their loss at Fort Loudoun. As a result, France **ceded**, or gave up, all its claims to land east of the Mississippi River in 1763. Tired after years of fighting, the British hoped to avoid further conflict with Native Americans by prohibiting settlements beyond the Appalachian Mountains in the **Proclamation of 1763**. Although still powerful, the Cherokee had lost some of their independence by forming military alliances and trade because their lands were directly in the path of migration across the mountains.

As early as 1750, colonial explorers began to cross the mountains and explore Cherokee lands. While working for the Loyal Land Company of Virginia, **Dr. Thomas Walker** discovered the **Cumberland Gap**. A **gap** is a low area between

![Fort Loudoun on the Tennessee River](image)

![Cumberland Gap, the early passage to Kentucky and Middle Tennessee](image)
mountains. The Cumberland Gap was used by Native Americans and later by colonial settlers to reach Tennessee and Kentucky. Throughout the 1750s and 1760s, **longhunters** crossed the mountains into Cherokee territory. Longhunters earned their name by hunting for six to seven months before returning home. The longhunters shared their knowledge of the lands west of the Appalachian Mountains which encouraged settlers like **William Bean** to ignore the Proclamation of 1763 and move west into the valleys of East Tennessee.

By the early 1770s, four different communities had been established in northeastern Tennessee—on the Watauga River, the North Holston, the Nolichucky, and in Carter’s Valley. The settlers claimed that they were living on land that was part of Virginia, but a land survey showed that claim to be false. A **land survey** locates, describes, and maps the boundaries of a piece of land. Because the Proclamation of 1763 prohibited buying land from the Cherokee, the settlers negotiated leases for their farms instead. Since Watauga and the other settlements were outside the boundaries of the colonies, colonial law did not apply. As a result, the independent-minded settlers created their own government in a document called the **Watauga Compact** in 1772.

In addition to settlers, land speculators from Virginia and North Carolina also raced to acquire western lands. **Land speculators** were businessmen who obtained cheap land from the Native Americans, hoping to resell it at a profit to incoming settlers. In March of 1775, **Richard Henderson** of North Carolina negotiated a private treaty with the Cherokee for the purchase of twenty million acres of land that included most of Kentucky and Middle Tennessee. In return, the Cherokee received six wagon loads of goods worth about 10,000 English pounds. The deal was known as the **Transylvania Purchase**. Henderson hired **Daniel Boone** to cut a trail through the Cumberland Gap that became known as the **Wilderness Road**. A few days later, the settlers asked the Cherokee to turn their lease into a purchase. Cherokee leaders such as **Little Carpenter** agreed, and the deal became known as the **Watauga Purchase**. Other Cherokee leaders were opposed to any plan to sell their ancestral lands. **Dragging Canoe** warned the settlers that they were
purchasing a “dark and bloody ground.” He retreated south to establish the warlike Chickamauga tribe, which attacked Tennessee settlements for the next twenty years.

The Wataugans’ willingness to ignore the Proclamation of 1763 and purchase land from the Cherokee demonstrated their contempt for the strict rules of the British government. Despite their isolation, the Wataugans were aware of the increasing anger towards the British government demonstrated in events such as the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party. However, the Wataugans’ most important problem was continued hostility from the Cherokee. The Cherokee, angry about losing more and more land to the settlers, allied themselves with the British in the Revolutionary War. Concerned about the safety of the settlements, the Wataugans asked North Carolina for help in a document known as the Watauga Petition. A petition is a formal written request to a person or group, such as a government. North Carolina agreed to help, and the settlements became a part of the state known as the Washington District.

In July 1776, the Cherokee launched well-planned attacks on the East Tennessee settlements. The Wataugans, led by their popular leader John Sevier, stopped the Cherokee and swiftly counterattacked. The settlers were helped by Cherokee leaders who wanted to avoid war, such as Beloved Woman Nancy Ward. Militia from North Carolina and Virginia assisted the Wataugans as well. Militia are groups of ordinary citizens who fight in times of emergency. The Wataugans invaded Cherokee territory and burned several towns. This series of battles is known as the Cherokee War. The alliance with Britain was a mistake for the Cherokee. The alliance gave the Americans an excuse to reduce the tribe’s military power and take more land after the war. Following the Cherokee War, the Wataugans focused on matters at home until the
fall of 1780. Responding to a threat made by British Major Patrick Ferguson, John Sevier and Isaac Shelby led a group of militiamen over the mountains to fight Ferguson and his Tory, or Loyalist, troops at the Battle of Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780. The Overmountain Men were joined by militia from Virginia and North Carolina. The Patriot force defeated Ferguson’s troops and set in motion the chain of events that ended one year later with Cornwallis’s surrender at Yorktown.

The Revolution gave settlers an opening to push the frontier westward to the Cumberland River. Longhunters such as James Robertson, Kasper Mansker, and Thomas Sharpe Spencer had hunted and trapped through Middle Tennessee and spoke of its richness to their neighbors at home. Following the Transylvania Purchase, Henderson hired Robertson to plan a settlement along the Cumberland River. In the winter and spring of 1779, 300 pioneers made the difficult trek to French Lick, the future site of Nashville. French Lick was the location of a natural salt lick along the Cumberland River that had been the location of a French trading post. Most of the men came overland under Robertson’s
leadership, while John Donelson led a *flotilla*, or fleet of ships, carrying women, children, and enslaved people on a hazardous voyage down the Tennessee River and up the Cumberland River. The travelers endured freezing temperatures and attacks from the Chickamauga before reaching their destination. Because the Cumberland Settlement was outside the boundaries of the colonies, the settlers formed their own government in a document known as the **Cumberland Compact**. This first band of settlers established a number of fortified stations and spread across the Central Basin in search of good farmland. **Stations** were log homes surrounded by walls and used as forts during attacks. The Cumberland settlers withstood fourteen years of brutal attacks by Creek and Chickamauga warriors from the Tennessee River towns, including the **Battle of the Bluffs** in 1781. Nearly all of the early families lost someone in the fighting, but the Cumberland Settlements survived. More settlers came, and in time, the threat of attacks by Native Americans faded. Traders, hunters, and land speculators had found the Tennessee country, but it was the farmers that would make it a state.
Chapter 3: From Territory to Statehood

In the days before statehood, Tennesseans struggled to gain a political voice and suffered because North Carolina did not want the trouble or expense of protecting its western counties. Washington, Sullivan, Greene, Davidson, Sumner, and Tennessee Counties needed protection from Native American attacks as well as help building roads and forts. The national government formed under the Articles of Confederation was too weak to meet the westerners’ demands. Westerners wanted protection from Native Americans and the right to navigate the Mississippi River. In 1784, frustrated settlers formed the breakaway State of Franklin, also known as “Frankland.” The ever-popular John Sevier was named gov-

1798 map of “Franklinia,” also known as the State of Franklin in East Tennessee

Terms & Definitions
- Ratify—to approve
- Squat—to illegally settle on land
ernor, and the state began operating as an independent but unrecognized government.

At the same time, leaders of the Cumberland Settlements approached Spain about forming an alliance. Spain controlled the lower Mississippi River and was thought to be urging Native Americans to attack the Cumberland Settlements. Early Tennesseans had already exercised some of the rights of self-government by writing the Watauga and Cumberland Compacts. In 1785, the State of Franklin sought recognition as a state from the Confederation Congress. However, it failed to get the two-thirds majority required under the Articles of Confederation. North Carolina opposed the formation of the State of Franklin and began to reassert control over its western counties. By 1788, the pressure from North Carolina and fighting among the East Tennesseans themselves led to the collapse of the State of Franklin. When North Carolina finally rati-fied, or approved, the new Constitution of the United States in 1789, it also ceded its western lands, the Tennessee country, to the Federal government. Congress named the area the Territory of the United States, South of the River Ohio, more commonly known as the Southwest Territory.

President George Washington appointed William Blount as territorial governor. Land grant laws passed in North Carolina created a booming market in Tennessee land before settlers had ever arrived. Land
speculation was based upon cheaply amassing large amounts of western land in hopes that the price of the land would increase when more settlers arrived. Most of Tennessee’s early political leaders, including Blount, Sevier, Henderson, and Andrew Jackson, were involved in land speculation. It was sometimes difficult to tell if their political decisions were meant to benefit the people or themselves.
Before public land was sold and legally settled, Native Americans had to be persuaded to drop their claims to the land. In 1791, Blount traveled from Rocky Mount, his home in upper East Tennessee, to present-day Knoxville to negotiate a treaty with the Cherokee. The Cherokee signed the Treaty of the Holston in June. The treaty stated that United States citizens could not settle on Cherokee land. However, settlers often ignored the rules and squatted, or illegally settled, on Native American land. The increase in squatters angered the Cherokee and Creeks who launched a series of attacks in 1792. The remote Cumberland Settlements were easy targets for Creek raiding parties. In order to protect their settlements, James Robertson organized an attack that destroyed the Lower Towns in Chickamauga territory. Additional attacks by the militia stopped the raids on the settlements and led to a period of peace and prosperity in the region.

With peace restored, Governor Blount moved ahead with plans to create a state. Blount called for a constitutional convention to meet in Knoxville, where delegates from all the counties drew up a model state constitution and democratic bill of rights. The voters chose John Sevier as governor. Tennessee leaders converted the territory into a state before asking Congress for approval. Since the Southwest Territory was the first Federal territory to apply for statehood, Congress was uncertain how to proceed. Members of the Federalist party opposed statehood for Tennessee because they assumed voters in Tennessee would support their opponents, the Democratic-Republicans. Despite these problems, Congress approved the admission of Tennessee as the sixteenth state of the Union on June 1, 1796.

Chapter 4: Tennessee’s Coming of Age

The new state of Tennessee began to grow quickly once the threat of war with Native Americans declined. After 1806, the state began to sell public land for low prices, which attracted settlers from the East. Between 1798 and 1806, the Cherokee and Chickasaw signed a number of treaties in which they ceded large areas of land. The state gained much of the south-central region and most of the Cumberland
Plateau. This was especially important because it gave the state control over all the land from the eastern counties to the Cumberland Settlements. It also made it easier for travelers to reach the Cumberland Settlements.

The availability of so much land, some of which was very fertile, caused Tennessee’s population to grow very rapidly. Between 1790 and 1800, the state's population tripled. It grew 250 percent from the years 1800 to 1810, increasing from 85,000 to 250,000 during the first fourteen years of statehood alone. By 1810, Middle Tennessee had moved ahead of the eastern section in population. This shift in population led to a shift in political power from the older region of East Tennessee to the middle section of the state. The state capital was Knoxville from 1796 to September 1807, when the capital was Kingston for a day. The capital was relocated back to Knoxville until 1812, moved to Nashville from 1812 to 1817, then returned briefly to Knoxville. From 1818 to 1826, the General Assembly met in Murfreesboro, and in 1826, the capital moved to its permanent site in Nashville.

Slavery played a major role in Tennessee’s rapid expansion. The territorial census of 1791 showed an African American population of 3,417—ten percent of the general population. By 1800, the African American population had jumped to 13,584 (12.8 percent), and by 1810, African Americans made up more than twenty percent of Tennessee’s people. Most African Americans in Tennessee were slaves. More slaves were brought to the state following the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney in 1793. Cotton and

Cotton on the stalk grown in the fertile Mississippi Valley lowland near Memphis
tobacco grew well in the fertile soil of Middle and West Tennessee but required intensive labor, or work, to produce. As a result, slavery was more common in Middle and West Tennessee than mountainous East Tennessee. By 1830, there were seven times as many slaves west of the Cumberland Plateau as in East Tennessee.

In addition to slaves, Tennessee had a fairly large population of free African Americans. The 1796 Constitution had granted suffrage, or voting rights, and relative social equality to free African Americans. The 1796 Constitution also made it easy for owners to manumit, or free, their slaves. As slavery became more and more important to Tennessee’s economy, the laws changed. It became more difficult for owners to free their slaves, and free African Americans lost many rights. Some Tennesseans opposed the expansion of slavery, especially in East Tennessee where an emancipation movement developed. Emancipation is an action taken by the government to free slaves. In 1819, Elihu Embree established the first newspaper in the United States devoted entirely to freeing slaves at Jonesborough. The newspaper was originally called the Manumission Intelligencer, but the name was later changed to the Emancipator. By the 1820s, East Tennessee had become a center of abolitionism. Abolition is the desire to abolish or end slavery. East Tennessee was a staging ground for the issue that would divide not only the state but the nation.

Tennessee prospered and developed rapidly between 1806 and 1819. Thirty-six of Tennessee’s ninety-five counties were formed between 1796 and 1819. Isolated settlements developed quickly into busy county seats. A county seat is the town from which the county’s government operates. Nashville, no longer under constant threat of attack, became one of the leading cities of the Upper South.

Despite the growth of towns, Tennessee remained mostly rural. Log cabins remained the most common type of housing. Eighty percent of
The Emancipator, one of America's first anti-slavery newspapers
Tennesseans were farmers, and most worked simply to supply the food needs of their families. However, income could be made from selling certain “cash crops.” Cotton and tobacco were cash crops from the beginning. They were profitable, easily transported, and could be worked on plantations, or large farms, with slave labor. Tennessee farmers also converted corn, the state’s most important crop, into cornmeal and whiskey.

They also fed corn to hogs which were then butchered to produce cured pork. Because of poor roads, Tennesseans relied mainly on rivers to move their crops to market. Products were shipped by keelboat or flatboat to Natchez and New Orleans on the Mississippi River.

Most types of manufacturing, like spinning cloth, soap-making, and forging tools, were done in the farm household. Household chores were mostly divided by gender. Women were generally responsible for preserving food, cooking, producing cloth and clothing, and caring for children. Men cleared fields, planted crops, forged tools, and cared for animal herds. Children performed many chores such as gathering eggs, milking cows, and working alongside their parents. Some families ran businesses to process farm products. Grist mills ground corn and wheat into meal and flour. Sawmills cut lumber, and tanneries processed animal hides. Distilleries turned corn into whiskey. The one true industry in early Tennessee was ironmaking. Frontier ironworks were constructed in upper East Tennessee by men who had immigrated from Pennsylvania. James Robertson built the first ironworks, called the Cumberland Furnace, in Middle Tennessee in 1796. Soon Middle Tennessee ironmasters built many furnaces and forges to take advantage of the abundant iron ores of the western Highland Rim region. These were complicated enterprises that used both slaves and freemen.
to dig the ore, cut the wood for charcoal, and operate the furnace. The early Tennessee iron industry supplied blacksmiths, mill owners, and farmers with the metal they needed and laid the groundwork for future industrial development.

The hardworking settlers had little time for recreation. As a result, the settlers found ways to combine work and recreation. All able-bodied men were required to serve in the militia. The days when the militia mustered, or gathered for duty, served as festive social occasions for the whole county. There was little opportunity for organized religious services in the early days and few ministers to preach. Instead, itinerant, or traveling, ministers held camp meetings. Because travel was so difficult, frontier families would camp near the meeting site for several days. The Methodists and Baptists gained many converts through the camp meetings. Because many of Tennessee’s early settlers were Scots-Irish, Presbyterianism was also very popular. Presbyterianism insisted on an educated clergy, which led to the development of many schools in early Tennessee. Ministers such as Reverend Samuel Doak in East Tennessee and Reverend Thomas Craighead in Middle Tennessee founded academies in the 1790s. Academies chartered by the state were supposed to receive part of the proceeds from the sale of state lands, but this rarely happened. While state support for education languished, ministers and private teachers took the lead in setting up schools across the state.

Relations between whites and Native Americans were relatively peaceful after 1794, although trespassing on Indian land was common, and life continued to be hazardous for settlers in remote areas. However, as Tennesseans pushed west and south toward the Tennessee River, they began to press upon Creek territory, and fighting resumed. The Creeks were the most formidable tribe on the Tennessee borders, and they were widely believed to be under the influence of hostile British and Spanish agents. In 1812, Tecumseh and his brother, the Prophet, succeeded in creating a confederacy, or alliance, of tribes in the Ohio Valley. Tecumseh wanted to roll back white settlement. Tecumseh visited the Creek Nation in 1811 to urge the southern tribesmen to join his movement. His prophecy that the earth would trem-
ble as a sign of the coming struggle was seemingly confirmed by a series of massive earthquakes in 1811–1812. The New Madrid Earthquakes caused the Mississippi River to run backwards for a time and resulted in the creation of Reelfoot Lake.

Anti-British feeling ran high in Tennessee, and Tennesseans were easily willing to link the Native American threat with British actions on the high seas. Led by Felix Grundy of Nashville, the state’s representatives were prominent among the “War Hawks” in Congress, who wanted to go to war with Great Britain. When war was declared in June 1812, Tennesseans saw an opportunity to rid their borders once and for all of Native Americans. Their chance came soon enough. News reached Nashville in August 1813 of the massacre of some 250 men, women, and children at Fort Mims, Alabama. Tecumseh’s message had taken hold, and the Creek Nation was split by civil war. The Fort Mims attack was carried out by the war faction, called Red Sticks, under their chief, William Weatherford. Governor Willie Blount immediately called out 2,500 volunteers and placed them under the command of Andrew Jackson. Jackson’s 1813–1814 campaign against Weatherford’s warriors, known as the Creek War, was the Southern phase of the War of 1812. Jackson faced many challenges including lack of support
from the War Department, shortages of supplies, and a mutiny, or rebellion, by some of his soldiers. Despite these problems, Jackson won several victories against the Red Sticks. His victory at the Battle of Tohopeka, or Horseshoe Bend, utterly destroyed Creek military power. As a result, Andrew Jackson and his lieutenants, William Carroll and Sam Houston, gained national prominence, or importance.

Following his victory over the Creeks, Andrew Jackson was appointed major general in the U.S. Army and given command of the Southern military district just in time to meet an impending British invasion of the Gulf Coast. Jackson secured Mobile, Alabama and drove the British out of Pensacola, Florida. Jackson then hurriedly marched his troops to New Orleans to rendezvous, or meet, with other Tennessee units converging to defend the city. On January 8, 1815, Jackson’s ragtag troops inflicted a crushing defeat on an experienced British army. British general Sir Edward Pakenham was killed along with hundreds of his soldiers. The Americans only suffered twenty-three casualties. Because of poor communication, the battle actually occurred fifteen days after the signing of the peace treaty with Great Britain in Ghent, Belgium. The Battle of New Orleans was a brilliant victory and one of the few clear American successes of the war. This triumph launched Andrew Jackson on the road to the presidency. Three years later, he led another force of Tennesseans into Florida to stop attacks by the Seminoles. Jackson’s actions in Florida convinced Spain to cede Florida to the United States.

After forcing Creeks to cede their land claims, Jackson and Governor Isaac Shelby of Kentucky negotiated a treaty with the Chickasaw in 1818 that extended Tennessee’s western boundary to the Mississippi River. The agreement, also known as the Jackson
The Age of Jackson

**Purchase**, opened up a rich, new agricultural region for settlement. By 1820, the only Native Americans remaining in Tennessee were squeezed into the southeast corner of the state. The arrival of large numbers of settlers and a booming land market in West Tennessee caused a frantic period of business prosperity, which ended suddenly with the Panic of 1819. This brief but violent economic depression ruined most banks and many individuals. However, the state’s economy bounced back quickly. Cotton became the leading crop in West Tennessee, and **Memphis** became a center of the cotton trade. Tennesseans could look back on their first twenty-five years of statehood as a period of growth and prosperity comparable to that of any state in the nation.

**Chapter 5: The Age of Jackson**

The frontier phase of Tennessee’s history ended with the rapid settlement of West Tennessee after the Jackson Purchase. However, that did not end Tennesseans’ urge to move west. Large numbers of Tennesseans settled in Arkansas, Texas, Missouri, Illinois, Mississippi, and Alabama and joined enthusiastically in the California gold rush.

As Tennessee developed, the need for reliable transportation to connect the state to the rest of the nation increased. By 1820, the first steamboats reached Nashville. Steamboats made it faster, easier, and cheaper for farmers in Middle Tennessee to sell their products in downriver markets. Goods often arrived at Nashville by steamboat and were then transported overland on roads that radiated from the city like
the spokes of a wheel. The most famous of these roads, the Natchez Trace, connected Middle Tennessee directly with the lower Mississippi River. Memphis was established in the southwestern corner of the state after the Jackson Purchase. The town quickly developed into a thriving river port because of its steamboat traffic. Cotton bales from plantations were carted into Memphis to be loaded onto boats and shipped to New Orleans.

East Tennessee’s transportation problems were more difficult to solve because the region was landlocked. A landlocked region is one that has no access to larger bodies of water such as a sea. Though the Tennessee River ran through the region, it contained many shoals and other obstructions that made it very difficult to navigate. Shoals are shallow areas in rivers that often contain many sandbars. Although the steamboat Atlas managed travel as far as Knoxville in 1828, businessmen in East Tennessee began asking for state assistance in building railroads. However, government officials opposed such spending so Tennessee got a late start in railroad construction. The state had no railroad mileage in 1850, but by 1860, 1,200 miles of track had been laid, most of it in East Tennessee. East Tennessee’s railroads connected it to markets on the East Coast, but there was no line that connected Knoxville directly with Nashville. As East Tennessee began to develop railroads, coal mines, and industries, it became even more separate from the rest of the state.
By 1860, 1,200 miles of railroad track had been laid in Tennessee.
A map of the richest plantations of the Old South along the Mississippi River
Tennessee agriculture achieved great success during this period. In 1840, the state was the largest corn producer in the nation, and in 1850, it raised more hogs than any other state. Tennessee's transportation network allowed it to export food downriver to supply plantations in the Deep South. Tennessee benefited from growing a variety of crops including fruits, vegetables, hemp, tobacco, and grains. Farmers also raised mules and other livestock. Many southern states devoted so much land to growing cotton that they had to import food. Tennessee served as a breadbasket, or grain supplier, to states further south. This connected Tennessee to the cotton economy, but also made Tennessee different.

During this time period, Tennessee's cultural and intellectual life developed rapidly. Nashville became an early center of the arts and education in the South. Many traditional American tunes were preserved thanks to the music publishing industry which started in 1824. By the 1850s, the University of Nashville had grown into one of the nation's leading medical schools. Many of the physicians west of the Appalachians received their training there.

The noted Philadelphia architect William Strickland came to Nashville in 1845 to design and build the new state capitol. The design of the capitol was based on the architecture of ancient Greece. Strickland, Nathan Vaught, and the Prussian-born architect Adolphus Heiman also designed a number of elaborate churches and homes in Middle Tennessee. Businessmen and wealthy planters employed silversmiths, engravers, furniture makers, stencil cutters, printers, and music teachers. Early Tennessee portrait painters, such as Ralph E. W. Earl, Washington B. Cooper, and Samuel Shaver, produced numerous portraits.

From 1820–1850, Tennessee politicians had a huge influence on the nation. None had more of an impact than Andrew Jackson. Jackson's campaigns revolutionized, or radically changed, the American electoral system. Jackson lost the presidency in 1824 even though he received more popular votes, or votes from the people, than the other candidates. He also received more electoral votes than the other candidates, but not the majority he needed to be president. The House of Representatives had to decide between Jackson and John Quincy Adams, who had received the second-highest number of votes. Henry Clay, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, made a deal with Adams. Clay would influence the members of the House to vote for Adams, if Adams made Clay the Secretary of State. Adams
agreed and became president. Jackson’s supporters referred to the deal as the “corrupt bargain.” Many voters viewed the “corrupt bargain” as unfair, which caused them to vote for Jackson in 1828 and 1832. Jackson won both elections by a landslide majority. A landslide majority is when one candidate wins by a huge number of votes. Huge numbers of new voters took part in the elections of 1828 and 1832 because of changes to voting requirements. Jackson’s election signaled a shift in political power away from Virginia and New England to the west. Even after Jackson’s second term as president ended, he continued to have enormous influence over Tennessee and national politics.

Jackson faced several crises during his eight-year presidency. He clashed with South Carolina politicians who voted to nullify, or ignore, a Federal tariff, or tax. Jackson refused to back down even when South Carolina threatened to secede, or leave, the Union. Jackson also attacked the Bank of the United States because he viewed it as favoring the wealthy while denying loans to ordinary people. Jackson eventually won when the bank’s charter expired in 1836.

Most important for Tennessee was Jackson’s Indian removal policy. Jackson and his supporters in Congress wanted to move Native Americans to land west of the Mississippi River. Indian removal began when Georgia attempted to take over Cherokee land and property in that state. The Cherokee in North Georgia and Southeast Tennessee had adopted many elements of white culture including converting to Christianity, becoming slave owners, and writing a constitution. Sequoyah
The Age of Jackson created a writing system for the Cherokee language that allowed the Cherokee to become more literate than their white neighbors. Cherokee Principal Chief John Ross decided to fight the removal policy in the court system. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Cherokee, but Jackson refused to enforce the decision. Georgia was allowed to continue with its plans to take Cherokee land, and Jackson ordered the army to forcibly remove the Cherokee from their lands if necessary. A small number of tribe members gave in to the increasing pressure from the government and signed the Treaty of New Echota in 1835. However, most Cherokee firmly opposed giving up their land. Many Cherokee were still on their land in 1838 when the U.S. Army was sent to evict them and send them on a terrible journey to Indian Territory. Disease, hunger, and cold weather led to the deaths of thousands along the trail the Cherokee came to call the “Trail of Tears.” A small band of Cherokee who refused to comply with forced removal escaped into the Smoky Mountains, where their descendants still live. The lands taken from the Cherokee were quickly sold by the state to settlers, who turned Chief John Ross’s Landing into the town of Chattanooga.

Several other leading Tennessee politicians developed their careers in opposition to Jackson and his Democratic party. William Carroll served six terms as governor, from 1821 through 1835, despite a lack of support from Jackson. David Crockett, Hugh Lawson White, Ephraim Foster, James C. Jones, Newton Cannon, and John Bell also rose in power while opposing the Democrats. Some businessmen resented Jackson’s war on the national bank. Others felt excluded from Jackson’s inner circle of political allies. Many Tennesseans in the Eastern Division favored using government money for internal improvements such as roads, bridges, and railroads. They also wanted government to assist the growth of industry. Jacksonian Democrats generally opposed spending government money in these ways. As a result, Andrew Jackson’s home state became a birthplace of the anti-Jackson Whig Party. The Whigs took their name from a political party in England that opposed the king. Whig candidates for governor won six out of nine elections between 1836 and 1852, but all of the elections were extremely close. Whigs also carried Tennessee in six consecutive presidential elections. The state went so far as to vote against Tennessee Democrat James K. Polk for president in 1844. Voter participation rates
reached all-time highs during this time period. The two political parties competed fiercely for votes through newspapers, barbecues, and stump speeches. Stump speeches are standard speeches used by a politician running for office. The speeches got their name because candidates would often stand on stumps to help their voices carry while speaking to large crowds.

Tennessee earned the nickname “Volunteer State” during this period for its role in America’s wars of expansion. Tennesseans played important roles in the War of 1812, the Texas Revolution, the Seminole Wars, and the Mexican War. Jackson and his troops saved the Gulf Coast from British claims and forced Native American tribes to give up major portions of Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Kentucky. Jackson’s 1818 expedition into Florida resulted in that territory becoming part of the United States. In 1836, Tennesseans David Crockett and Sam Houston led the fight for Texan independence. Crockett died at the Alamo, but Houston led the Texans to victory at San Jacinto and later became president of the Lone Star Republic. Tennesseans volunteered in large numbers for the war with Mexico and played key roles in several battles. Perhaps the ultimate military adventurer was Nashvillian William Walker.

During the 1850s, Walker led several expeditions to create independent, slaveholding republics in Lower California and Central America.

Tennessee politicians also played a key role in the expansion of the United States’ boundaries. Felix Grundy declared in 1811 that he was “anxious not only to add the Floridas to the South, but the Canadas to the North of this empire.” Tennessee’s congressional representatives were leading “War Hawks” in 1812 and throughout the conflict with Mexico. Having already removed Native Americans from millions of acres of land, Jackson’s final act as president was to recognize the Lone Star Republic. When James K. Polk of Maury County was elected president in 1844, his first act was to annex, or add, Texas to the United States. The Mexican War was primarily a war of Southern expansion. By the end of the war, the United
An 1848 map of Mexico, California, and Oregon, which represents much of the territory taken by the United States in the war with Mexico.
States had gained California, the New Mexico territory, and Oregon. Tennessee politicians believed in the idea of manifest destiny and played key roles in the nation’s expansion. Most Tennesseans resented anti-slavery Northerners who raised the issue of banning slavery in the new territories in the Wilmot Proviso.

The Wilmot Proviso did not pass, but it demonstrated the deep division in the country over slavery. Tennessee’s slave population had increased from 22.1 percent of the population in 1840 to 24.8 percent in 1860. Ownership of slaves was concentrated in relatively few hands: only 4.5 percent of the state’s white population were slaveholders in 1860. As the demand for cotton increased, the cost of slaves also increased. Nashville and Memphis were renowned centers of the slave trade. The profitability of cotton and slave labor made planters determined to resist Northern attacks on slavery.

In the early 1830s, two events caused Tennessee to tighten laws related to slaves and free African Americans. The Virginia slave uprising led by Nat Turner badly frightened slave owners. White Tennesseans reacted by stepping up “patrols” for runaways and tightening the rules regulating slave conduct, assembly, and movement. The state Constitution was amended in 1834 to prevent free African Americans from voting. Free African Americans were pressured to leave the state, and rumors of planned slave insurrections, or rebellions, kept tensions high. By the 1850s, Tennessee was sharply divided between anti-slavery advocates in East Tennessee and diehard defenders of slavery in West Tennessee. From 1848 onward, slavery overshadowed other political issues. Political parties and church denominations broke apart over slavery. Newspapers waged a vicious war
of words over abolitionism and the fate of the Union. Southern delegates met in Nashville in 1850 to express their anger over Northern interference in slavery. Tennessee’s economic and social ties with the Lower South meant the state was mostly pro-slavery. However, Tennessee had a long tradition of military and political service to the nation. Therefore, most Tennesseans did not support secession. Tennessee and the rest of the country stood on the brink of disaster in 1860.

Chapter 6: The Time of Troubles

Despite the political tensions over slavery, trade and farm wealth climbed steadily in the 1850s. To some Tennesseans, economic success confirmed the superiority of Southern agriculture—slavery and all. Planters had invested too much money purchasing slaves to willingly give up their slaves. They viewed the election of anti-slavery Republican Abraham Lincoln in 1860 as a disaster. Lincoln had so little support in Tennessee that his name was not even on the ballot. Though relatively small in numbers, slaveholders exerted great influence over the political affairs of Middle and West Tennessee, and they were convinced that the time had come for a break with the North. Governor Isham Harris was also enthusiastically pro-secession and worked hard to align Tennessee with the ten states that had already seceded from the Union.

Most Tennesseans initially showed little enthusiasm for breaking away from the nation. In 1860, John Bell of the Constitutional Union Party won Tennessee’s electoral votes by a small margin. Tennessee native Bell was a moderate who wanted to find a way keep the nation together. In February 1861, fifty-four percent of the state’s voters voted against sending delegates to a secession convention. After the firing on Fort Sumter in April, President Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 troops to force the seceded states back into line. This angered many Tennesseans who believed that the decision to stay in or leave the Union belonged to the states. Governor Harris began raising troops, contacted the Confederate government, and submitted an ordinance of secession to the General Assembly. In a June 8 vote, East Tennessee held firm against separation,
while West Tennessee overwhelmingly voted for secession. The big shift came in Middle Tennessee, which went from fifty-one percent against secession in February to eighty-eight percent in favor in June. Tennessee became the last state to withdraw from the Union. War was inevitable.

While Tennesseans on both sides of the conflict acted heroically, the fact remains that this was the worst of times for Tennessee and its people. Families across the state endured hardship and loss through-

Terms & Definitions

- **Billy Yank**—nickname for Union soldiers
- **Contraband camps**—camps organized for fugitive slaves who fled to Union army camps
- **Fugitive slaves**—runaway slaves
- **Guerrilla**—a fighter who uses ambushes, sabotage, and hit-and-run tactics to attack larger armies or other groups of guerrilla fighters
- **Johnny Reb**—nickname for Confederate soldiers
- **Requisition**—an official order to claim property for military use
- **Siege**—a military operation in which an enemy surrounds a fort or town and cuts off essential supplies

Results from Scott and Hardeman Counties from the June 8 vote to secede
The Time of Troubles

out the conflict. For most Tennesseans, the period from 1861–1865 was a brutal time when death and ruin ruled the land. Tennessee sent large numbers of men to fight on both sides of the Civil War. One Confederate soldier, Sam Watkins, would later write about his experiences as a “humble private” in a memoir titled *Company Aytch*. Tennessee provided 187,000 soldiers for the Confederacy and 51,000 soldiers for the Union. Tennessee’s divided loyalties were evident throughout the state. Rival recruiters signed up *Johnny Rebs*, or Confederate soldiers, and *Billy Yanks*, or Union soldiers, just a few blocks from each other in Knoxville. Unionist Scott County declared itself to be the Free and Independent State of Scott. In McNairy County, Unionist Fielding Hurst organized mounted soldiers to aid the Union and protect the area known as “Hurst Nation” from guerrilla attacks. *Guerrilla* fighters use ambushes, sabotage, and hit-and-run tactics to attack larger armies or other groups of guerrilla fighters.

The troops that Governor Harris turned over to the Confederate government became the basis of the Confederacy’s main western army, the Army of Tennessee. While a few Tennessee Confederates were sent east to Lee’s army, most of Tennessee’s Confederate soldiers fought on their home soil. As a result, the Confederate Army of Tennessee fought particularly hard against the better-armed and more numerous...
Union army. Both the Union and the Confederacy recognized that Tennessee’s rivers could serve as natural pathways into the South. Therefore, Confederate Commander Albert Sidney Johnston set up a defensive line from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River. The weakest points were Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River. In late January 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant and Commodore Andrew Foote steamed up the Tennessee River with seven gunboats and 15,000 troops to attack Fort Henry. Union gunboats quickly defeated the half-flooded fort. While Foote’s boats came back around to the Cumberland River, Grant marched his army overland to lay siege to Fort Donelson. A siege is a military operation in which an enemy surrounds a fort or town and cuts off essential supplies. The Confederate guns there were

Bombardment of Fort Henry in Stewart County

Storming of Fort Donelson by the Iowa Second Regiment
more than a match for the Union gunboats. Though the Confederates had a good chance at breaking through the siege, three generals decided to surrender on February 15, 1862. Colonel Nathan Bedford Forrest refused to surrender and managed to lead some troops out of the fort. Approximately 10,000 Confederate soldiers were surrendered and packed off to Northern prison camps.

The loss of Fort Donelson was the first real catastrophe for the Confederacy. In a show of force, Foote sent the gunboats steaming up the Tennessee River into Alabama. The rivers that had been so valuable to Tennessee before the war now became routes by which Union forces captured the region’s towns and cities. Nashville had been left undefended except for two weak forts. Union troops cap-

View of the stockades around the Tennessee State Capitol

Recruitment flyer from Nathan Bedford Forrest to the citizens of Columbia and Maury County
A hospital requisition form for the Confederate army, December 1864

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tured the city on February 24, 1862, as frightened residents streamed southward out of the city. The loss of Nashville and Middle Tennessee was a huge blow to the Confederate war effort. The Confederacy had lost one of its chief manufacturing centers, tons of badly needed supplies, and one of its richest farm regions. Nashville remained in Union hands until the end of the war, sparing it the destruction suffered by other Southern cities. The city would serve as the headquarters, supply depot, and hospital center of the Union command in the West.

The retreat of Confederate forces to Mississippi left West and Middle Tennessee occupied by enemy troops, a harsh condition that soon stirred up resistance from civilians. Vicious behind-the-lines warfare broke out between Confederate guerrillas and Union troops. There was widespread fighting in East Tennessee between Unionist and Confederate sympathizers. The breakdown of civil order offered many opportunities for settling old scores. Houses were burned, property was stolen, and lives were taken by bands of armed men who roamed the countryside. Guerrilla warfare was particularly brutal on the Cumberland Plateau where Confederate guerrilla Champ Ferguson and Unionist “Tinker” Dave Beaty were responsible for many deaths.

In April 1862, General Johnston’s army attacked Grant’s troops near Shiloh Chapel in Hardin County. The two forces were of roughly equal size, but the Confederates
seized the advantage. By evening, they had nearly driven Grant's men to the Tennessee River but did not deliver the knockout blow. The fighting cost the lives of many men, including General Johnston himself. During the night, 25,000 fresh Union troops reinforced Grant's battered troops, allowing him to mount a strong counterattack the next day. The weary Confederates, now under the command of General P.G.T. Beauregard, were forced to withdraw that evening. Shiloh was a bloody wake-up call for the nation. More men were lost in the Battle of Shiloh than in all of America's previous wars, and both sides began to realize that the war would be long and costly.

Tennessean David Farragut's capture of New Orleans in late April was an important step in the Union's plan to control the entire Mississippi River. Another important port city on the Mississippi came under Union control when Memphis surrendered on June 6, 1862. Middle and West Tennessee were entirely under Union control. Ironically, only pro-Union East Tennessee remained in Confederate hands. Governor Harris and the state government, which had moved to Memphis after Nashville's fall, were forced to flee the state altogether. In its place, President Lincoln appointed former Governor Andrew Johnson to be military governor. A loyal Greeneville Unionist, he had kept his seat in the U.S. Senate despite Tennessee's secession. Johnson introduced a new political order to Union-occupied Tennessee. Johnson wanted to return the state to the Union as soon as possible by favoring the Unionist minority and suppressing the pro-Confederate crowd. Johnson was unpopular and was often forced to use Union troops to enforce his orders.

Confederate hopes were raised in the late summer of 1862, when brilliant cavalry raids by Forrest and John Hunt Morgan stopped the Union's advance on Chattanooga and returned control of lower Middle Tennessee to the Confederates. Under the command of the quick-tempered Braxton Bragg, the Army of Tennessee advanced into Kentucky. Following the Battle of Perryville, Bragg's army camped near Murfreesboro to await the Union's next move. In late December, an army of 50,000 under William Rosecrans moved out from Nashville to confront the Confederates near Murfreesboro. On December 31, the Confederates drove the Union back on the first day of battle, but were stopped by the Union's strong defensive positions. On January 2, Bragg launched a disastrous infantry assault in which the Confederates were slaughtered by Union artillery. One of every four men who fought at Stones River was killed, wounded, or missing.

The Army of Tennessee stayed in a defensive line along Duck River until late July 1863, when Rosecrans maneuvered Bragg into abandoning the vital rail center of Chattanooga and retreating into North Georgia. The overconfident Rosecrans stumbled into Bragg's army along Chickamauga Creek. On September 19 and 20, the two armies fought savagely in the woods—a battle that one general compared to “guerrilla warfare on a grand scale.” On the second day, part of Bragg's force poured through a gap in the Union line and nearly defeated Rosecrans's army.
General George Thomas earned the nickname the “Rock of Chickamauga” by stopping the Confederate advance and allowing the rest of Rosencrans’s army to escape. Bragg won a great victory at Chickamauga but at a frightful cost (21,000 casualties out of 50,000 troops), and he again failed to follow up his success. The Union troops dug in around Chattanooga, while the Confederates occupied the heights above the town. Grant hurried to Chattanooga to take charge of the situation, and, on November 25, his troops drove Bragg’s army off Missionary
Ridge and back into Georgia. It would be nearly a year before the Confederate army returned to Tennessee.

At the same time that Bragg abandoned Chattanooga, a Union force under Ambrose Burnside captured Knoxville. The whole state was now in Union hands. Local citizens were burdened by the constant requisitions of food, grain, and livestock. A **requisition** is an official order to claim property for military use. Adding to the problem, undisciplined troops stole anything that could be eaten from local citizens. Being forced to supply both the Union and Confederate armies caused more destruction and loss of property in Tennessee than actual combat.

The war brought a sudden end to slavery. African Americans rejoiced in their freedom but were uncertain about their future in Tennessee. The system of plantation discipline and slave patrols began to break
down early in the war. Union commanders organized “contraband” camps to accommodate the large numbers of *fugitive*, or runaway, slaves who streamed into Union camps. The Union impressed, or forced, African Americans from the *contraband camps* into service as laborers. The men built railroads, bridges, and forts throughout Tennessee. Missionaries and sympathetic Union officers provided education for people in the camps. They also arranged for some ex-slaves to work for wages on military projects. Hiring African Americans to work for the U.S. government helped former slaves to transition from being unpaid laborers to freedmen. In late 1863, the Union army started recruiting men to serve in “colored regiments.” The call was answered by 20,133 Tennesseans. These men made up forty percent of Tennessee’s Union recruits. African Americans in Tennessee gained citizenship and the right to vote earlier than other African American Southerners partly because of their record of military service.

In the fall of 1864, William T. Sherman’s army captured the city of Atlanta. This convinced John Bell Hood, commander of the *Army of Tennessee*, to take bold action. Hood wanted to draw the Union out of Georgia by threatening Nashville. Hood’s plan had little chance of success, but the Confederacy’s situation was desperate, and Hood was desperate for glory. The Tennessee

Impressed slaves began construction of the North Western Railroad for the Union army, later completed by the 12th and 13th U.S. Colored Infantries.

Lithograph of the Battle of Franklin
troops were in high spirits as they crossed into their home state. They would meet the Union army at Franklin on November 30, 1864. On Hood’s orders nearly 20,000 men charged across an open field towards Union troops protected by temporary defenses made of earth and tree branches. As regiment after regiment hurled itself against the Union line for five ferocious hours, 1,750 Confederate soldiers were killed. Hood’s recklessness had destroyed the Army of Tennessee. The Union retreated towards Nashville where the two armies fought again on December 15–16, 1864. The United States Colored Troops played a key role in the Union victory at Nashville. Hood’s forces managed to retreat but would never again challenge Union control of Tennessee. Although the war would continue for another four months, the Battle of Nashville effectively ended the war in Tennessee.

The Civil War had devastating effects on Tennessee. So many young men were severely wounded or killed that many young women remained unmarried in the years that followed. Planting and harvesting were extremely difficult during the war. The small amount of food that was produced during the war years was consumed by the armies. With the slaves gone, husbands and sons dead or captive, and farms neglected, many large plantations and small farms were abandoned. The economic gains of the 1850s were erased, and farm production and property values in Tennessee would not reach their 1860 levels again until 1900. On the other hand, the 275,000 Tennesseans who had been enslaved four years earlier were no longer anyone’s property. They were free at last. Others who benefited from the Civil War were the behind-the-lines profiteers who sold goods for outrageous prices. Veterans of both sides lived with the wounds and memories of the war for the rest of their lives, and the chief reward for most was a place of honor in their communities.

**Chapter 7: Reconstruction and Rebuilding**

Tennessee’s problems did not end when the war was over, but continued during the postwar period known as Reconstruction. The war’s legacy of political bitterness endured for years after the surrender of Confederate armies. The war split Tennessee’s society into rival groups who wanted to get revenge on each other.
Each side wanted to use political power to punish its enemies and stop them from participating in the political system. This political fighting was only slightly less violent than the war that had just ended.

President Lincoln’s formula for reconstructing the Southern states required that only ten percent of a state’s voters take the oath of allegiance and form a loyal government before that state could apply for readmission. In 1864, Lincoln selected Tennessee Unionist and Democrat Andrew Johnson as his vice presidential running mate. Lincoln selected Johnson because he wanted to show Southerners that the South would receive fair treatment when the war was over. In January 1865, after Andrew Johnson departed for Washington to become Lincoln’s vice president, a group of Tennessee Unionists met in Nashville to begin the process of restoring Tennessee to the Union. They nominated William G. “Parson” Brownlow of Knoxville for governor, rejected the act of secession, and planned a vote on an amendment to the state Constitution abolishing slavery. About 25,000 voters approved the amendment and elected Brownlow as governor, essentially meeting the requirements of Lincoln’s plan.

Terms & Definitions

- **Amnesty**—forgiveness for an offense
- **Buffalo Soldiers**—African American soldiers in the United States Army who played a key role in the Indian Wars of the late 1800s
- **Carpetbaggers**—Northern businessmen who relocated to Tennessee to take advantage of cheap labor and abundant natural resources. They were viewed as shameless opportunists by some Tennesseans who called them carpetbaggers because so many of them arrived with their belongings in carpet bags.
- **Contraband camps**—military forts
- **Exodusters**—freedmen who moved to Kansas after the Civil War
- **Grassroots movement**—political or social movement that begins with people on the local level
Tennessee became the only seceded state to abolish slavery by its own act. Lincoln’s assassination in April launched Johnson into the presidency and signaled a drastic shift in the course of Reconstruction. The Radical Republicans were gaining power in Congress, and they wanted to punish the South more than either Lincoln or Johnson did. Johnson was not a very skillful negotiator, and he soon found himself in conflict with the Radical Republicans. Congress refused to seat Tennessee’s congressional delegation. Members of Congress claimed that Johnson’s plan to give amnesty, or forgiveness, to most former Confederates was too lenient. Congress ordered that only states that extended citizenship and legal protection to freedmen and denied voting rights to former Confederates by ratifying the Fourteenth Amendment.
would be readmitted. Ultimately, Johnson’s conflict with Congress would lead to his impeachment. Though Johnson was acquitted of the charges, he did not run for reelection in 1868.

Many Tennesseans opposed the Fourteenth Amendment because it denied former Confederates the right to participate in government. Despite these objections, Brownlow was able to force the General Assembly to ratify the amendment on July 18, 1866. This action paved the way for Tennessee’s early readmission to the Union. Tennessee became the third state to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, before any other Southern state and earlier than most Northern states. Though many citizens despised Brownlow’s government, it ensured that Tennessee rejoined the nation sooner than any other seceded state. More importantly, it meant that Tennessee would be the only Southern state to escape the harsh military rule inflicted by the Radical Congress.

Governor Brownlow’s administration cooperated with the Radical Republicans in Congress, but not with the majority of the people in its own state. Brownlow faced considerable opposition from other Unionists who resented his undemocratic methods. Therefore, he decided to give the vote to freedmen in order to strengthen his support at the polls. Accordingly, in February 1867, the Tennessee General Assembly declared its support for giving voting rights to African American males. This came two years before Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment. With the help of African American voters, Brownlow and his slate of candidates swept to victory in the 1867 elections. A slate of candidates is a group of political candidates who share a set of political views.

Brownlow’s unpopular and undemocratic government caused its own downfall. The Ku Klux Klan emerged in the summer of 1867, one of several shadowy vigilante groups opposed to Brownlow and freedmen’s rights. Vigilantes are people who use violence to enforce the rules or laws of their society. In this case, the Klansmen wanted to enforce the pre-Civil War rules that denied rights to African Americans. These groups were made up largely of ex-Confederates. Their goal was to intimidate the African American voters by attacking their homes and families. Many former Confederates joined the Ku Klux Klan because it was the only political organization open to them while Brownlow was governor. In 1869, Brownlow was selected to fill a seat in the United States Senate. With Brownlow gone, the Klansmen saw a path back to political power. The group officially disbanded in 1869 but would be revived in the early twentieth century.
Brownlow’s departure for Washington gave conservatives a chance to bring ex-Confederates back into state government. Brownlow’s successor, DeWitt Senter, was also thought to be a Radical Republican. However, once Senter took office, he allowed ex-Confederates to register to vote. As a result of their support, Senter easily won the governorship in the election of 1869. Seven times as many Tennesseans voted in 1869 than in 1867.

In 1870, delegates from across the state met to rewrite the state Constitution. While the delegates were mostly conservatives, they were careful to write a constitution that would allow Tennessee to avoid Federal military occupation. Delegates ratified the abolition of slavery and voting rights for freedmen but limited voter participation by enacting a poll tax. A poll tax is a tax that must be paid before a person can vote.

Political reconstruction effectively ended in Tennessee with the rewriting of the Constitution, but the struggle over the civil and economic rights of black freedmen had just begun.

After the war, African Americans faced more difficulties than most other Tennesseans. Many freedmen left the plantations and rural communities for urban areas such as Memphis, Nashville, and Nashville.

The Freedmen’s Bureau considered education a key to the future and was organized to teach basic reading, writing, and math skills to freed men, women, and children.
Chattanooga, and Knoxville looking for work and a chance to improve their lives. Freedmen also fled the countryside to escape the violence of groups like the Klan. These newcomers settled near the contraband camps, or military forts, where black troops were stationed. Over time, these areas developed into major African American communities such as North Nashville and South Memphis. In time, an African American professional and business class developed in the cities.

One institution created specifically to aid former slaves was the Freedmen's Bureau. With help from Northern missionaries, the Freedmen's Bureau set up hundreds of public schools for African Americans. Freedmen responded enthusiastically to the new schools, and a number of colleges—Fisk, Tennessee Central, LeMoyne, Roger Williams, Lane, and Knoxville—were soon founded to meet the demand for higher education. However, the Freedmen's Bureau was not generally successful in helping African Americans acquire their own land. Most African Americans in the countryside were laborers or tenant farmers. After the army left in 1866, the Freedmen's Bureau declined in influence. In the future, Tennessee freedmen had to rely on themselves and their own leaders to advance their goals.

African Americans were politically active and exercised their newfound legal rights even after the Radical Republicans lost power in 1869. They brought suits in the county courts, filed wills, and ran for local elected offices, particularly in the cities where they commanded strong voting blocs. A voting bloc is a group of voters who share common concerns and therefore vote for the same candidates. Beginning with Sampson Keeble of Nashville in 1872, thirteen black legislators were elected to the Tennessee House of Representatives. Much of their legislative work consisted of try-
ing to protect the rights gained during Reconstruction. S. A. McElwee, Styles Hutchins, and Monroe Gooden, elected in 1887, would be the last black lawmakers to serve in Tennessee until the 1960s.

Once the Democrats regained political power, they began to reverse the movement towards racial equality. The Klan had enforced white supremacy with lynchings, beatings, and arson. **Lynching**s are illegal executions usually carried out before the accused has a trial. Beginning in the 1870s, the Legislature began to pass laws designed to make African Americans second-class citizens. These laws were called **“Jim Crow” laws** after a character in a popular traveling show. Poll taxes and literacy tests targeted African American voters and greatly reduced the number of African Americans participating in the political system. By the 1880s, the Legislature demanded separate facilities for whites and blacks in public accommodations, like boarding houses, and on railroads.

One young woman, Ida B. Wells, challenged the “separate but equal” law on the railroads in an 1883 court case. Wells had purchased a ticket for the ladies’ car and refused to give up her seat when the conductor demanded she move to the “Jim Crow” car. Wells later sued the railroad company and won in the lower courts, but the Tennessee State Supreme Court ruled against
her. Wells moved to Chicago and spent the rest of her life fighting for equality for African Americans and women. She drew the nation’s attention to the use of lynching as a means of terrorism against African Americans in her book *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*. Former slave and Chattanooga newspaperman Randolph Miller also fought discrimination in Tennessee. Miller helped to organize a boycott of Chattanooga’s streetcars after they were segregated.

Nashvillian Benjamin Singleton also worked to improve the lives of African Americans. Singleton urged his fellow freedmen to leave the South altogether to homestead in Kansas. The Homestead Act of 1862 gave settlers the opportunity to claim 160 acres of public land in the West. Homesteaders had to pay a small fee and live on the land continuously for five years. The freedmen who moved to Kansas were known as **Exodusters**.

Another group of African Americans who played an important role in the settlement of the West were the Buffalo Soldiers. Many **Buffalo Soldiers** were former slaves who joined the Union army after emancipation. Buffalo Soldiers like Tennessean George Jordan played an important role in the Indian Wars of the late 1800s. Jordan was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1890 for his leadership in an 1880 battle against Apaches. Despite receiving this honor, Jordan died in 1904 after being denied treatment at Fort Robinson’s hospital because he was African American.

One response to the labor shortage and property losses caused by the war was the campaign to rebuild a “New South” based on industry, skilled labor, and outside capital. Promoters and state officials worked hard to attract skilled foreign immigrants to the state. The state never succeeded in attracting a large number of immigrants. However, a few isolated German and Swiss colonies, such as Gruetli in Grundy County, were formed. As late as 1880, the foreign-born part of Tennessee’s population was still only one percent, compared with a national average of fifteen percent.

“New South” advocates backed the educational reform act of 1873. The act tried to establish regular school terms and reduce the state’s high illiteracy rate. A statewide administrative structure and general school fund were created, but the Legislature
failed to give the schools enough money to operate full time. Better progress was made during the 1870s in the field of higher education: Vanderbilt University was chartered; East Tennessee College was converted to the University of Tennessee; and Meharry Medical College, the first African American medical school in the nation, was founded. Finally, the University of Nashville became the Peabody State Normal School, one of the earliest Southern colleges devoted exclusively to training teachers.

The “New South” promoters also met with some success in attracting outside capital to Tennessee. Northern businessmen, many of whom had served in Tennessee during the war, relocated here to take advantage of cheap labor and abundant natural resources. Many Tennesseans viewed these businessmen as shameless opportunists and referred to them as “carpetbaggers” because many of the men arrived with their belongings in carpetbags. Perhaps the most prominent of these “carpetbaggers” was General John Wilder, who built a major ironworks at Rockwood in Roane County. Chattanooga’s iron and steel industry benefited greatly from Northern money. The city grew rapidly into one of the South’s leading industrial cities. In 1899, three lawyers from Chattanooga bought the rights to bottle Coca-Cola. The men then sold the right to bottle Coca-Cola to businessmen throughout the country. By 1890, the value of manufactured goods produced in Tennessee reached $72 million. Before the war, Tennessee only produced about $700,000 worth of manufactured goods per year.

State funding for railroad construction left Tennessee $43 million in debt. Tennessee’s lawmakers debated how to pay the debt for many years. One method that the state used to raise revenue, or income, was the infamous convict lease
system. In this system, prisoners were leased to private businesses as laborers. The business was responsible for providing food and shelter for the prisoners and preventing them from escaping. Legislators liked this system because it earned money for the state and prevented the state from having to build a new prison. In 1871, Tennessee began leasing prisoners for work in the coal mines of East Tennessee. In the Cumberland Plateau region, the largest mine operator was the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company (TCI). In 1884, TCI signed an exclusive lease with the state for the use of convicts in its mines. In addition to keeping labor costs low, convict lease labor was one means of overcoming strikes. According to A. S. Colyar, TCI's president, “The company found this an effective club to hold over the heads of free laborers.”

Trouble erupted in 1891 at mines in Anderson and Grundy Counties, when TCI used convicts as strikebreakers against striking coal miners. Miners began releasing convicts and burning down the
stockades where they were housed. Violence in the coal fields peaked during the summer of 1892, when state militia was sent to the Coal Creek area by Governor John Buchanan. The militia fought a series of battles with armed miners, known as the Coal Creek War. More than 500 miners were arrested, and twenty-seven miners were killed. The Coal Creek War convinced the General Assembly to end convict leasing in 1895 when the TCI contract expired, making Tennessee one of the first Southern states to get rid of the system. The state also built two new prisons at Nashville and Brushy Mountain in Morgan County. Prisoners at Brushy Mountain mined coal in state-owned mines.

Though most Tennesseans were still farmers, it became harder and harder for them to earn a living. Before the war, Tennessee's farmers had grown a wide variety of crops. After the war, farmers concentrated on growing cash crops such as cotton, tobacco, and peanuts. Falling farm prices, high railroad rates, and the Depression of 1873 all worked against independent farmers. As a result, many farmers became sharecroppers. Sharecroppers rented land to farm and paid the landowner by giving him a portion of the crop they produced. Sharecroppers were nearly always in debt at high interest rates for land, tools, and supplies, and they were typically the poorest class of farmers.

In the 1880s, Tennessee farmers began to organize in a series of political movements. In 1886, votes from farmers helped Robert Taylor win the race for governor. Taylor defeated his brother in the famous “War of the Roses” campaign. Three years later, a farmers’ organization called the Agricultural Wheel signed up 78,000 members in Tennessee, more than in any other state. The Wheel later merged with an organization called the Farmers’ Alliance to create a strong grassroots movement. A grassroots movement is a political or social movement that begins with people on the local level.

In 1890, Alliancemen put their candidate, John Buchanan, in the Governor’s Office. Buchanan’s farmer-dominated Legislature passed the first pension act for Confederate veterans. The pension act allowed Confederate veterans or their families to receive a small monthly payment from the state. However, Buchanan’s popularity suffered as a result of his handling of the Coal Creek uprising. The Tennessee Alliance joined with the newly formed Populist Party to organize a serious challenge to the traditional two-party system. Democrats, however, spread rumors that the Populists and Republicans had made a deal. The Democrats also criticized the alliances for admitting African American members, which damaged the Populists’ reputation among white farmers. By 1896, the Populists and Farmers’ Alliance
had virtually disappeared in Tennessee, another victim of the dismal racial politics of the period.

The state continued its military tradition. When the Spanish-American War began in 1898, four regiments of Tennesseans volunteered for the United States Army. The Second, Third, and Fourth Regiments were sent to Cuba, where they suffered from heat and disease but saw little action. The First Tennessee Infantry was dispatched to San Francisco and then by troopship to Manila in the Philippines. There, these troops aided in the suppression of the Filipino nationalist movement, returning to Nashville late in 1899.

Late nineteenth-century Tennessee has been called a “social and economic laboratory” because of the variety of experimental communities established here. The state became home to a number of utopian colonies, land company settlements, and recreation spas. Leaders of utopian communities wanted to create perfect communities based on their individual philosophies. These communities were formed in part due to the availability of cheap land in remote natural surroundings.

In 1880, some absentee landowners sold English author Thomas Hughes a large tract of land in Morgan County, on which he established the Rugby colony. For the next twenty years, English and American adventurers settled here to take part in the intellectual and vocational opportunities Rugby offered. Another experimental colony was Ruskin, founded in 1894 by the famous socialist publicist Julius Wayland. Located on several hundred acres in rural Dickson County, Ruskin was a cooperative community in which wealth was held in common, and members were
paid for their work in paper scrip based on units of labor. Both Rugby and Ruskin had declined by 1900.

Tennessee had begun to recover from the devastation of the Civil War. Sixteen percent of the state’s two million people lived in cities in 1900, with the largest city, Memphis, having a population of 102,300. Memphis had survived three separate outbreaks of deadly yellow fever during the 1870s. Yellow fever is spread by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. Memphis was especially vulnerable to yellow fever because its poor sanitation and drainage systems gave the mosquitoes many places to breed. During the 1878 outbreak, most of Memphis’s wealthy citizens fled, and the city almost ceased to function. Many brave doctors, nurses, nuns, and priests remained in the city to care for the sick, only to contract the illness themselves. The priests and nuns of St. Mary’s Cathedral who died after contracting yellow fever from their patients are known as the Martyrs of Memphis. The epidemics killed 7,750 people. A new state board of health helped the river city to overhaul its health and sanitation system which reduced the threat of future outbreaks. People and businesses flocked to Memphis in the following years.

Nashville was also proud of its development after the war. In 1897, Nashville hosted a huge celebration in honor of the state’s 100th birthday. The Tennessee Centennial Exposition showcased industrial technology and recreations of the world’s wonders including the Parthenon. The centennial was the ultimate expression of the Gilded Age in the Upper South. During its six-month run at Centennial Park, the Exposition drew nearly two million visitors to see its dazzling monuments to the South’s recovery. Governor Robert Taylor observed, “Some of them who saw our ruined country thirty years ago will certainly appreciate the fact that we have wrought miracles.”
Yellow fever quarantine scenes from Memphis
Chapter 8: Early Twentieth Century

As the new century began, Tennessee was troubled by conflicts between the values of its traditional agrarian, or farm-based, culture and the demands of an increasingly urban world. Having lost its position of national leadership during the Civil War, the state had become somewhat isolated from the changes taking place in large cities. Tremendous intellectual, scientific, and technological innovations were sweeping America early in the twentieth century. Tennessee became a major battleground where these forces clashed with traditional ways of life. Political debates focused on issues such as Prohibition, Women's Suffrage, religion, and education.

The Temperance movement originally focused on limiting the consumption of alcohol. However, by 1900 it had become a movement to prohibit liquor altogether, known as Prohibition. Tennessee had a long history of alcohol production that had continued despite the efforts of Federal agents and local sheriffs to stop it. In 1877, Temperance advocates in the General Assembly had managed to pass a "Four Mile Law," prohibiting the sale of alcohol within a four-mile radius of a public school. Thirty years later, the liquor issue dominated the race for governor. Senator Edward Carmack, the "dry" candidate was defeated by Malcolm Patterson who opposed Prohibition. Through his newspaper, the Tennessean, the defeated Carmack waged a fierce war of words against Governor Patterson and his supporters. On November 9, 1908, the argument culminated in a gun battle on the streets of Nashville that left Carmack dead and two of the governor's closest advisors charged with murder.

Carmack's killing gave the Prohibition movement a martyr, in part because the man who shot him was pardoned by the governor. A martyr is a person who is killed because of his or her beliefs. Carmack's death created the momentum to pass legislation extending the "Four Mile Law." The new law banned liquor over virtually the entire state. Prohibitionists gained control of the

DEClaration of Principles
OF THE SOUTHERN WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR THE REJECTION OF THE PROPOSED SUSAN B. ANTHONY AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

We are unalterably opposed to any further extension of the franchise to women. We believe that women should take such part in political matters as will best enable them to exert their influence on legislation, but we are opposed to the granting of suffrage to women, whether by way of amendment to the national or state constitutions. We believe that women are capable of exercising their influence on legislation without the possession of the franchise, and that the right of the franchise is a political privileges which should not be extended to women. We believe that the granting of the franchise to women would be a serious injury to the interests of the country, and that it would be a great mistake to extend the franchise to women.

Martin College students advocating for Prohibition

Anti-suffrage document issued by Southern Women's League for the rejection of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment
Republican Party, and their candidate, Ben Hooper, won election as governor in 1910 and 1912. Tennessee remained officially “dry” from 1909 until the repeal of national Prohibition in 1933. However, the law met with considerable resistance from the mayors of Nashville and Memphis who used saloons as gathering places for the members of their political machines. Political machines are political organizations in which one person controls the politics of a city by providing supporters with jobs, city contracts, or other rewards. Statewide Prohibition was never effectively enforced, yet the issue continues today in the form of “local option” ordinances against liquor.

Tennessee became the focus of national attention during the campaign for Women’s Suffrage, or voting rights. Women’s Suffrage, like Temperance, was an issue with its roots in middle-class reform efforts of the late 1800s. The movement began to see success after the founding of the Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association in 1906. Led by wife and mother Anne Dallas Dudley, Tennessee suffragists were able to dispel many stereotypes about themselves looking “mannish” and being uncaring towards their children. Anti-suffragists, led by Josephine Pearson, argued that Women’s Suffrage would bring an end to the traditional southern way of life. Despite a determined opposition, Tennessee suffragists were moderate in their tactics and gained limited voting rights in 1919. In 1920, Governor Albert Roberts called a special session of the Legislature to consider ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Leaders of the rival groups flooded into Nashville to lobby the General Assembly. In a close House vote, the suffrage amendment won passage.
when an East Tennessee legislator, **Harry Burn**, switched sides after receiving a telegram from his mother encouraging him to support ratification. With Burn’s vote, Tennessee became the thirty-sixth state to ratify the amendment, and Women’s Suffrage became national law. Women immediately made their presence felt by
swinging Tennessee to Warren Harding in the 1920 presidential election—the first time the state had voted for a Republican presidential candidate since 1868.

Tennessee gained further national attention during the so-called “Monkey Trial” of John T. Scopes. In 1925, the Legislature passed a law that forbade the teaching of evolution in public schools. Some local boosters in Dayton concocted a scheme to have Scopes, a high school biology teacher, violate the law and stand trial as a way of drawing publicity and visitors to the town. Their plan worked all too well, as the Rhea County courthouse was turned into a circus of national and even international media coverage. Thousands flocked to Dayton to witness prosecutor William Jennings Bryan and defense attorney Clarence Darrow argue their case.

Tennessee was ridiculed in the Northern press as the “Monkey State,” even as a wave of revivals defending religion swept the state. The legal outcome of the trial was unimportant. Scopes was convicted and fined $100, a penalty later canceled by the state court of appeals. The law itself remained on the books until 1967. The case was more important because it expressed the anxiety felt by Tennessee’s rural people over the threat to their traditional religious culture posed by modern science.

Another clash between community practices and the forces of the modern world took place in 1908 at Reelfoot Lake in the northwest corner of the state. The lake had for many years supported local fishermen and hunters who supplied West Tennessee hotels and restaurants with fish, turtles, swans, and ducks. Outside businessmen and their lawyers began buying up the lake and shoreline in order to develop it as a private resort. In the process, they denied access to the lake to local citizens who depended on the lake to earn

![Political cartoon of the Scopes Trial](image)

![Thousands flocked to small-town Dayton to witness the spectacle of the Scopes Trial.](image)
a living. The residents tried to stop the developers in court. When that approach failed, they resorted to the old custom of vigilante acts, often called night-riding, to stop them.

Dressed in masks and cloaked in darkness, the night riders terrorized county officials, kidnapped two land company lawyers, and lynched one of them in the autumn of 1908. Governor Patterson called out the state militia to stop the violence; eight night riders were brought to trial, but all eventually went free. Fearing further outbreaks of violence over the private development of the lake, the state began to acquire the lake property as a public resource. In 1925, Reelfoot Lake was established as a state game and fish preserve, marking a first step toward the conservation of Tennessee’s natural resources.

Ironically, at the very time that Tennessee’s rural culture seemed to be under attack, its music found a national audience. In 1925, WSM, a powerful Nashville radio station that could be heard throughout the South, began broadcasting a weekly program of live music that was soon known as the Grand Ole Opry. The Opry provided a wide range of entertainment including banjo-and-fiddle string bands of Appalachia, family gospel-singing groups, and country vaudeville acts like that of Murfreesboro native Uncle Dave Macon. Vaudeville acts combined singing, dancing, and comedy routines. One of the most popular stars of the Tennessee Opry was an African American performer, Deford Bailey. Still the longest-running radio program in American history, the Opry used the new technology of radio to tap into a huge market for “old-time” or “hillbilly” music. Two years after the Opry’s opening, field scouts of the Victor Company traveled to Bristol, Tennessee. There they recorded Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family to produce the first nationally popular rural records. Tennessee became known as the birthplace of traditional country music.

Just as Tennessee was fertile ground for the music enjoyed by white audiences, so was it a center for the blues music popular with African Americans. Both had their roots in the dances, harvest festivals, work songs, and camp meetings of rural communities. Because of its location at the top of the Mississippi River Delta, Memphis was a center for this
music by the 1920s. The city became a magnet that drew performers from cotton farms to the clubs of Beale Street, the Upper South's premier African American main street. Musician and composer W. C. Handy was able to transform blues songs into sheet music. This allowed blues music to spread outside the South. However, blues music lacked the radio exposure that benefited country music. Beale Street offered a rich musical setting where one could hear everything from W. C. Handy's dance band to the jazz-accompanied blues of Ma Rainey or Chattanooga-born Bessie Smith. Delta blues spread across the country as better highways and the lure of wartime jobs brought greater numbers of rural African Americans into the cities. Memphis was also home to an important innovation in food purchasing. In 1916, Clarence Saunders opened Piggly Wiggly, the nation's first self-service grocery store.

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, around 100,000 of the state's young men volunteered or were drafted into the armed services. A large propor-
# Great World War

## Tennessee's Roll of Honor

### Gold Star Records

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<tr>
<th>Name in full</th>
<th>Jim Granberry</th>
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<td>Chauffeur</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name and address of nearest kin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date and place of entering service</td>
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<td>Company</td>
<td>G</td>
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<td>Date of arrival in Europe</td>
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<td>Promotions</td>
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<td>Honors</td>
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<td>Meuse-Argonne Offensive</td>
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<td>Casualties (including taken prisoner) date and place</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause of death</td>
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tion of those men actually served with the American Expeditionary Force in Europe. More than 17,000 of the 61,000 Tennessee draftees were African Americans, although African American units were still segregated and commanded by white officers. Four thousand Tennesseans were killed in combat or died in the influenza epidemic that swept through the crowded troop camps in 1918. Lawrence Tyson of Knoxville played a key role in breaking the Hindenburg Line in September of 1918. The Hindenburg Line was a heavily fortified area near the border between France and Belgium considered to be Germany’s last line of defense. Tennessee provided the most celebrated American soldier of the First World War: Alvin C. York of Fentress County. York initially resisted serving in the military for religious reasons but later changed his mind. In October of 1918, York captured an entire German machine gun regiment in the Argonne Forest. As a result, York received the Congressional Medal of Honor as well as French military honors. York also became a powerful symbol of patriotism in the press and Hollywood film.

State politics and government were transformed following World War I. Austin Peay of Clarksville served as the first three-term governor since William Carroll, due in large part to the backing of rural and small-town voters. Governor Peay streamlined government agencies and reduced the state property tax while imposing an excise tax on corporate profits. An excise tax is a tax on a particular good or item. When his administration began, the state had only 250 miles of paved roads, but Peay undertook a massive roadbuilding program with the money generated by Tennessee’s first gasoline tax. He crisscrossed the state with thousands of miles of hard-surface highways, making him very popular among voters in rural areas.

Another achievement of the Peay administration was the part it played in overhauling public education. At the beginning of the century, Tennessee had no state-supported high
Early Twentieth Century

schools, and fewer than half its eligible children attended school. Teachers’ salaries were terrible, and the only public university did not receive any state funding. In 1909, the Legislature set aside twenty-five percent of the state’s revenue, or income, for education, and in 1913, that share was increased to one-third. A law requiring school attendance was passed, county high schools were established, normal schools for training teachers were built, and the University of Tennessee finally received state support. However, schools remained segregated so the Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial Normal School was built to serve African Americans. Building on this base, Governor Peay’s 1925 education law gave funding for an eight-month school term and began the modern system of school administration. The 1925 act also supplemented teacher salaries, standardized teacher certification, and turned the normal schools into four-year teacher colleges. Although some of these reforms did not survive the thirties, Tennessee nevertheless had dramatically improved its public school system.

The stock market crash of October 1929 is usually considered to be the start of the Great Depression. In Tennessee, the hard times had started earlier, particularly for farmers. World War I had raised agricultural prices, but with the coming of peace, the export markets dried up and prices dropped. The longest and most devastating drought on record added to farmers’ problems. These problems drove many of the poorest farmers off the land as the old sharecropping system collapsed. Tractors and mechanical cotton pickers were also reducing the number of hands needed to farm. As a result, both white and African American sharecroppers migrated to cities in the 1920s. During this period known as the Great Migration, Tennessee’s African American population declined as thousands of people moved to northern industrial centers like Chicago.
Some of these country people found jobs at Tennessee factories, such as the DuPont plant in Old Hickory, rayon plants in Elizabethton, Eastman Kodak in Kingsport, and the Aluminum Company of America Works plant in Blount County. These large enterprises had replaced the earlier “rough” manufacturing—textiles, timber, and flour and mill products—as the state’s leading industries. The Alcoa plant was built specifically to take advantage of East Tennessee’s fast-falling rivers in order to generate electricity. Private hydroelectric dams were constructed in the state as early as 1910, and the possibility of harnessing rivers to produce power would eventually prove a strong attraction for industry. Tennessee was still a predominantly agricultural state, but it now had a growing industrial workforce. In East Tennessee, it also had the beginnings of an organized labor movement. Strikes, while less common than in northern states, were becoming more widespread. However, Tennessee’s industrial economy was soon damaged by the shutdowns and high unemployment of the 1930s.

The Depression made everyone’s life worse: farmers produced more and made less in return; young people left the farms only to be laid off from jobs in the cities; merchants could not sell their goods; doctors had patients who could not pay; and teachers were paid in heavily discounted scrip instead of U.S. currency. Scrip is a type of paper currency issued by a private company or local government. In the countryside, people dug ginseng or sold walnuts to make a little extra income. City dwellers lined up for “relief” in the form of food or went back to the farms where they could at least survive. Local governments were unable to collect taxes, and hundreds of businesses failed (578 in 1932 alone). In 1930, the failure of three major banking institutions, including Caldwell and Company, brought most financial business in the state to a grinding halt. The collapse of the financial empire of Nashvillian Rogers Caldwell cost the state $7 million, and thousands of depositors lost their savings. The collapse nearly caused the impeachment of newly elected Governor Henry Horton. Governor Horton had close ties with Caldwell and his Pickwick Landing Dam is a hydroelectric dam on the Tennessee River in West Tennessee, Hardin County.
political ally, Luke Lea, a newspaper publisher who was ultimately convicted of fraud and sent to prison.

Former Memphis Mayor Edward H. Crump led the outcry against Horton and quickly assumed the role as “boss” of state politics and Shelby County. Between 1932 and 1948, anyone who wished to be governor or senator had to have Crump’s blessing, although some of his followers defied the “boss” once they were in office. A two-dollar poll tax kept voter turnout low during these years. However, the Crump organization routinely paid the tax for Shelby County voters who voted as they were told. This meant Shelby County often produced the majority of the state’s votes and allowed Crump to control statewide Democratic primaries. In 1936, for example, Gordon Browning won election as governor with the help of 60,218 votes from Shelby County to only 861 for his opponent. Crump was the most powerful politician in Tennessee during most of the thirties and forties, by virtue of being able to deliver a vast bloc of votes to whichever candidate he chose.

Mayor Crump and Nashville Mayor Hilary Howse’s political machines succeeded in part because of the support they received from black political organizations. Robert Church, Jr., was the political leader of the Memphis black community, a major Republican power broker, and a dispenser of hundreds of Federal jobs. In Nashville, James C. Napier held much the same position as a political spokesman for middle-class African Americans. These leaders followed a moderate course, avoiding confrontation and accepting the limited rights and freedoms offered by white politicians like Crump. However, other African Americans were willing to attack “Jim Crow” laws more directly. In 1905, R. H. Boyd and other Nashville businessmen followed a successful boycott of segregated streetcars by organizing a competing, black-owned
streetcar company. Twenty years later in Chattanooga, black workingmen organized to defeat a revived Ku Klux Klan at the polls. They also formed a local chapter of the Universal Negro Improvement Association following a visit from Black Nationalist leader Marcus Garvey. By taking industrial jobs at higher wages, serving in the military, or simply leaving the landlord’s farm, African Americans achieved a degree of independence that made them less willing to tolerate second-class citizenship.

For the first time since Reconstruction, Tennesseans returned to the national political spotlight in the 1920s. Joseph W. Byrns of Robertson County was Speaker of the United States House of Representatives during the crucial early years of the New Deal. Senator Kenneth D. McKellar of Memphis, who worked closely with the Crump organization, served six consecutive terms, from 1916 to 1952. As powerful chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, he steered a considerable amount of military spending and industry Tennessee’s way during World War II. Cordell Hull of Celina served in Congress from 1907 to 1933, except for the two years he spent as Democratic National Chairman. Hull authored the 1913 Federal Income Tax bill and guided American foreign policy for twelve years as Secretary of State.

Tennesseans, like most Americans, gave a tremendous majority to Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1932 presidential election. Roosevelt’s New Deal programs would have as great an impact in Tennessee as anywhere in the nation. One hundred thousand farmers statewide participated in the crop reduction program of the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), while 55,250 young men enlisted in one of the thirty-five Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps in the state. The road building projects and public works of the Public Works Administration (PWA) and Works Progress Administration (WPA) put thousands of unemployed Tennesseans to work. New Deal agencies spent large sums of tax dollars in Tennessee ($350 million in 1933–1935 alone) in an effort to stimulate the region’s economy through public employment and investment. The Cumberland Homesteads project gave farm-land and homes to poor families. Families could use the farm products to meet their basic needs.
or provide supplemental income. The community in Cumberland County eventually had 251 homes with electricity and indoor plumbing as well as two schools and a variety of other community buildings.

By far the greatest expenditure of Federal dollars in Tennessee was made through the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). In one way or another, TVA had an impact on the lives of nearly all Tennesseans. The agency was created in 1933, due to the persistence of U.S. Senator George Norris of Nebraska. TVA’s headquarters were located in Knoxville. TVA was charged with the task of planning the total development of the Tennessee River Valley. TVA sought to do this primarily by building twenty hydroelectric dams between 1933 and 1951. Hydroelectric dams convert the energy generated by falling water into electricity. TVA also built several coal-fired power plants to produce electricity. TVA’s first project was a dam on the Clinch River. Some local residents thought the dam would benefit the area by bringing construction jobs and manufacturing jobs in
the future. Other residents opposed the project because it would flood thousands of acres of farmland and force families off land they had owned for generations. TVA worked with residents to address some concerns. For example, TVA relocated family and community cemeteries from land that would be flooded. Some residents attempted to stop the dam through the courts, while others simply stayed on their land until removed. Ultimately, Norris Dam was completed in March 1936. The main benefit of TVA was that it brought inexpensive and abundant electrical power to Tennessee, particularly to rural areas that previously did not have electrical service. TVA electrified some 60,000 farm households across the state. By 1945, TVA was the largest electrical utility in the nation, a supplier of vast amounts of power whose presence in Tennessee attracted large industries to relocate near one of its dams or steam plants.

One group of Tennessee-based intellectuals achieved national fame by questioning the desirability of such industrialization for the South. The “Agrarians” at Vanderbilt University celebrated the region’s agricultural history and challenged the wisdom of moving rural people aside to make room for modern development. Donald Davidson, in particular, objected to massive government land acquisitions that displaced communities and flooded some of the best farmland in the Valley. TVA, for example, purchased or condemned 1.1 million acres of land, flooded 300,000 acres, and moved the homes of 14,000 families in order to build its first sixteen dams. On a slightly smaller scale, 420,000 acres of forested, mountainous land along the crest of the Appalachian range was set aside during the 1930s for a national park. Although much of this land belonged to timber companies, creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park displaced some 4,000 mountain people, including long-standing communities like Cades Cove. The price of progress was often highest for those citizens most directly affected by such projects.

Despite the millions of dollars that TVA and the Federal government pumped into Tennessee, the Depression ended because of the economic boost that came from going to war. World War II brought relief mainly by employing ten percent of the state’s populace (308,199 men and women) in the armed services. Most of those who remained on farms and in cities worked in war-related production, as
Tennessee received war orders amounting to $1.25 billion. From the giant shell-loading plant in Milan to the Vultee Aircraft works in Nashville and the TVA projects in East Tennessee, war-based industries hummed with the labor of a greatly enlarged workforce. Approximately thirty-three percent of the state's workers were female by the end of the war. Nashvillian Cornelia Fort witnessed the attack on Pearl Harbor and went on to serve as a pilot in the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, or WAFS. Fort was killed in a midair collision in 1943. Tennessee military personnel served with distinction from Pearl Harbor to the final, bloody assaults at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, and 7,000 died in combat during the war. In 1942–1943, Middle Tennessee residents played host to twenty-eight army divisions that swarmed over the countryside on maneuvers preparing for the D-Day invasion. Camp Forrest in Tullahoma served as a prisoner of war camp for German and Italian POWs.

Tennesseans participated in all phases of the war—from combat to civilian administration and military research. Cordell Hull served twelve years as President Roosevelt's Secretary of State and became one of the chief designers of the United Nations, for which he received the Nobel Peace Prize. Ordinary citizens experienced the war's hardships through the rationing of food, gasoline, and other items. The government rationed, or limited the amount of goods civilians could purchase, to fulfill the needs of the military. The government encouraged families to plant victory gardens to produce vegetables. They were called victory gardens because they ensured that there was enough canned food available for American soldiers and sailors. Especially significant for the war effort was Tennessee's role in the Manhattan Project, the military's top secret project to build an atomic weapon. Research and production work for the first A-bombs were conducted at the huge scientific-industrial installation at Oak Ridge in Anderson County. The Oak Ridge community was entirely a creation of the war: it grew from empty woods in 1941 to Tennessee's fifth-largest city, with a population of 70,000, four years later. Twice in 1945, city streets and courthouse squares erupted with celebrations as the news of victory in Europe and the Pacific reached the state. For Tennessee, World War II constituted a radical break with the past. TVA had transformed the physical landscape of the state, and wartime industrialism had irreversibly changed the economy. Soldiers who had been overseas and women who had worked in factories returned home with new expectations for the future.
Cornelia Fort wrote this article describing her experience the day Pearl Harbor was bombed.
War ration book issued to Margaret D. Avery in Nashville
Chapter 9: Modern Tennessee

The pace of change increased dramatically for Tennesseans after 1945, especially for farmers. Ex-servicemen who had earned regular paychecks and seen other parts of the world simply were not willing to return to the backbreaking, mule-powered farm labor of the old days. Less risky, better-paying jobs were now available. Mechanization came late to Tennessee farms, but once it began, the changeover was rapid. The number of tractors in the state doubled during the war and increased almost ten times between 1940 and 1960. Soybeans, dairy cattle, and burley tobacco replaced the old regime of cotton, corn, and hogs as Tennessee’s main agricultural products.

Technological change was sweeping the countryside, bringing higher productivity but raising the cost of farming. New livestock breeds, fertilizers, better seed, chemical pesticides and herbicides, electricity, and machinery all combined to increase output, but the costs were more than many small farmers could afford. By the 1950s, thousands of Tennesseans had left the farms for cities. Many local Tennessee papers ran regular news columns from places like Detroit and Chicago. From a farm population that stood at 1.2 million in 1930, only 317,000 remained on farms in 1970. By 1980, fewer than six percent of Tennesseans earned their main income from farming.

As it became harder to earn a living in rural areas, Tennessee’s cities and towns continued to grow. In 1960, the state had more urban than rural dwellers for the first time. The postwar baby boom boosted growth in Tennessee’s four major cities. The demands of military production had brought several large industries to Tennessee. The Atomic Energy Commission facilities at Oak Ridge and the Arnold Engineering Center at Tullahoma remained in operation after the war. Chemicals and apparel led manufacturing growth between 1955 and 1965, a decade in which Tennessee made greater industrial gains than any other state. Inexpensive electricity, abundant resources, and a workforce no longer tied to the land encouraged rapid industrialization. By 1963, Tennessee ranked as the sixteenth-largest industrial state—a remarkable transformation for a state that, not so long ago, had been overwhelmingly agricultural.

The Tennessee Valley Authority played a major role in the state’s postwar development. TVA supplied power for a number of military projects during the Cold War.

Terms & Definitions

- **Boycott**—a boycott is a form of protest in which a group refuses to buy goods from certain businesses
- **Cold War**—the ongoing rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union that developed after World War II, characterized by intense propaganda campaigns, espionage or spying, and a nuclear arms race
- **Sit-in**—form of protest in which demonstrators refuse to leave a place until their demands are met
The Cold War was the ongoing rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union that developed after World War II. This period was characterized by intense propaganda campaigns, espionage or spying, and a nuclear arms race. By the time of the Korean War, over half of the power produced by TVA was being used by the government’s uranium enrichment facilities at Oak Ridge. To meet these growing power demands, TVA built eleven coal-fired, steam-generating plants between 1950 and 1970, including several of the largest steam plants in the world. Feeding these huge plants turned TVA into the nation's foremost consumer of strip-mined coal, forced a series of electrical rate hikes, and made the agency the target of numerous lawsuits over air pollution. TVA's venture into nuclear power increased its environmental troubles. By 1975, TVA had become the non-communist world's largest producer of nuclear power. However, cost overruns and safety problems closed down eleven of TVA's reactors and turned the bulk of the nuclear program into a costly write-off. Although it continues to serve as the Tennessee Valley's unique public utility, TVA has reduced both the size and the scope of its mission.

Returning servicemen and women helped bring about a change of the old political order in Tennessee. On primary election day in Athens on August 1, 1946, a battle occurred between former soldiers and the supporters of the entrenched political machine in McMinn County. For more than six hours, the streets of Athens blazed with gunfire as armed veterans laid siege to the jail where the sheriff and fifty “deputies” were planning to stuff the ballot boxes. The sheriff and deputies surrendered after the ex-servicemen threw dynamite at the jail. When the votes were counted, the candidates backed by the ex-servicemen had won clear victories. The so-called “Battle of Athens” actually represented the beginning of a statewide political cleanup. Local bosses were challenged by reformers who wanted to bring an end to the power of political machines. The veterans' victory demonstrated to Congressman Estes Kefauver and other up-and-coming politicians that the old style of Tennessee politics was about to change.

In the 1948 elections, Kefauver won a U.S. Senate seat, and former Governor Gordon Browning returned as Tennessee’s governor with the help of veterans’ votes. The men defeated handpicked candidates of Memphis Mayor Ed Crump.
The Kefauver and Browning victories spelled the end of “Boss” Crump’s twenty-year control of state politics. Although Crump continued to exert a powerful influence in the affairs of the Shelby County Democratic Party, he never again called the shots in statewide elections. The 1953 limited constitutional convention dealt a further blow to machine politics by repealing the state poll tax, a key element in politicians’ ability to limit and manipulate the vote.

Round two of the changing of the political guard came in 1952, when Albert Gore, Sr., defeated eighty-five-year-old Kenneth D. McKellar for the Senate seat that McKellar had held for thirty-six years. That same year, Governor Browning himself was defeated by a rising young political star from Dickson County, Frank Goad Clement. The constitutional revision had changed the governor’s term from two to four years. Either Clement or his friend and campaign manager, Buford Ellington, would occupy the governor’s mansion for the next twenty years. Clement, Gore, and Kefauver represented a moderate wing of the Southern Democrats. For example, Kefauver and Gore refused to sign the segregationist Southern Manifesto of 1956. Kefauver also opposed Senator Joseph McCarthy. In 1954, Kefauver was the only senator to vote against making it a crime to belong to the Communist Party. In 1956, Governor Clement delivered the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention, the same convention that named Kefauver as the party’s vice presidential candidate.

While veterans in Athens were helping overthrow the old political order, newly returned African American veterans in Columbia began a movement for improved civil rights for African Americans. A fight in a downtown Columbia department store in February 1946 set off a rampage by whites through the African American business district. African American veterans were determined to defend their community and themselves against the racial attacks and lynchings that had occurred in the past. Although the State Guardsmen prevented widespread riots, highway patrolmen ransacked homes and businesses, and two African American men taken into custody were killed. Twenty-five African American defendants were accused of encouraging the violence. These men were represented by Nashville attorney Z. Alexander Looby and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) counsel Thurgood Marshall. The men were eventually acquitted of the charges. More importantly, the Columbia Race Riot focused national attention on violence against African American citizens and prompted at least a verbal commitment from the Federal government to protect
the civil rights of all Southerners. The aftermath of the Columbia events created a precedent, or example, that organizations like the NAACP could use to push for further government protection of civil rights during the following decade.

The growing assertiveness of African Americans after 1945 was not an accidental development. The sacrifices of African American soldiers during World War II had made discrimination back home less tolerable. Favorable Supreme Court rulings and the willingness of President Roosevelt to reach out to African American leaders had encouraged government protection of civil rights. By 1960, two-thirds of Tennessee’s African American population lived in towns or cities, which made it easier to organize for collective actions such as boycotts or sit-ins. A boycott is a form of protest in which a group refuses to buy goods from certain businesses. A sit-in is a form of protest in which demonstrators refuse to leave a place until their demands are met.

Organization and discipline were nurtured in places like the Highlander Folk School in Grundy County. Founded by Myles Horton and Don West, Highlander became an important training center during the 1950s for community activists and civil rights leaders. The school was shut down by state officials at the height of the desegregation crisis, but it soon reopened to continue its work. Governor Clement was less harsh than other Southern governors in his opposition to the 1954 Supreme Court’s decision on Brown v. Board of Education, which ordered an end to segregated schools. He did not use his office to “block the schoolhouse door,” and he pledged to abide by the law of the land with regard to civil rights.

In 1950, four years before the landmark Brown decision, African American parents in Clinton filed suit in Federal district court to give their children the right to attend the local high school instead of being bused to an African American school in Knoxville. Early in

Signed by Eleanor Roosevelt, this letter advocated for funds to provide legal aid for African Americans involved in the Columbia Race Riot.

Highlander Folk School’s official statement of policy
1956, Judge Robert Taylor ordered Clinton to desegregate its schools based on orders from the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to rule in accordance with the *Brown* decision. Twelve African American students registered for classes that fall, and matters proceeded smoothly until agitators John Kasper of New Jersey and Asa Carter of the Birmingham White Citizens’ Council arrived in Clinton to organize resistance to integration. Governor Clement had to call out 600 National Guardsmen a few days after school opened to defuse the violent atmosphere. The African American teenagers courageously endured months of taunts and threats while attending the school. In May of 1957,
Bobby Cain became the first African American to graduate from an integrated public high school in the South. A year and a half later, three bomb blasts ripped apart the Clinton High School building.

In the fall of 1957, Kasper was back in the spotlight, this time in Nashville where the school board planned to integrate first grade in response to lawsuits brought by African American parents. Thirteen African American students registered at five formerly all-white schools, while as many as fifty percent of the white students stayed home. On September 9, Hattie Cotton School, where one African American child was enrolled, was dynamited and partially destroyed. Two years later, the Supreme Court approved Nashville’s grade-a-year integration plan. Memphis and many smaller towns, meanwhile, adopted an even slower pace in desegregating their schools. By 1960, only 169 of Tennessee’s 146,700 African American students attended integrated schools.

From 1960 to 1963, a series of demonstrations took place in Nashville that would have a national impact on the civil rights movement. Nashville’s African American community was uniquely situated to host these historic events due to the concentration of African American leaders in local universities and churches. African American doctors and lawyers also gave considerable support to the demonstrators. Kelly Miller Smith of the First Baptist Church, along with C.T. Vivian and James Lawson, who had studied Ghandi’s tactics of nonviolent resistance, provided leadership and training...
Lunch Counter Strikges Hit City

100 Students Appear At 3 Variety Stores; Demonstration Quiet

By JAMES TALLEY

An estimated 100 students—about 90 of them Negroes—went on a two-hour sitdown strike at lunch counters in three Nashville variety stores yesterday after waitresses refused to serve them. It apparently was part of a nationwide passive resistance movement by Negroes against lunch counter segregation.

The students walked into Woolworth, Kress and McLellan stores all in the same block on Fifth Avenue, North, about 12:45 p.m. and asked to be served lunch. Managers at Kress and McLellan immediately closed their counters.

The Woolworth counter was closed about an hour later.

The students were from Fisk University, A&I university, and American Baptist Theological Seminary, a Negro school on Whites Creek Pike.

"We just got tired of having no place to eat when we went downtown," said Miss Diane Nash, a Fisk junior. "So we decided to do something about it."

Miss Nash, a Negro, said the sitdown strike was intended as "a spontaneous student movement for equal recognition—not boycott."

However, Robert Bruce, assistant manager at Woolworth, told seven or eight of the students—including a white boy—entered the store Friday and counted the seats at the two lunch counters.

PAUL LAPARD, one of the white Fisk students in the group, said that the waitresses and managers at each store "were courteous, but not particularly nice."

At McLellan’s several clerks began sitting in front of the store’s two lunch counters, apparently to keep the students from filling the seats. They later gave up the attempt.

The demonstration was orderly. There were no incidents. Some of the students wandered about the stores, purchasing candy and other items, then returned to the counters. Some read books; others used their school homework.

One May, another Negro student leader, said the idea for the sitdown strike originated Wednesday at a Fisk and later appeal to A&I and the seminary "like a snowball rolling."

He said there was no "planned" picketing of the stores.

Several City detectives were on hand before the demonstration broke up about 2:40 p.m. Before the students left four uniformed police officers arrived, visited the store, and told the managers authorities could not stop the demonstration unless there were incidents.

May said he expects the demonstrators to be back at the stores Monday—and maybe every day this week.

John Yoe, one of the white students, said the group has given thought to "visiting" several other Nashville department stores. The three stores involved yesterday were all nationally-owned.

"We are primarily concentrating on national places," Yoe said, "but we may go to the local places too."

Lapard said the idea for the demonstration came from the demonstrations in North and South Carolina.

NEGROES IN ROCK HILL, S.C. sought counter service Friday at the Woolworth store there. The demonstration was peaceful except for one egg-throwing incident and heckling and jeering by several white students. That lunch counter was closed after Negroes arrived.

Negroes in New York’s Harlem demonstrated yesterday. Support for the movement from churches and anti-discrimination organizations and was bolstering the efforts of a North Carolina Negro attorney who said yesterday he would take the case of 11 arrested demonstrators to the U.S. Supreme court if necessary.

2. Alexander Leiby, a Negro attorney, and Nashville leader for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said the NAACP “definitely had nothing” to do with the demonstration here.

Most of the young students sat with their coats on. They braved a heavy snowstorm to make the trek downtown.

An empty row of lunch counter seats at Woolworth’s variety store—that is the scene minutes after scores of Negro students abandoned their sit-down strike. The counter was closed and they were refused service.

Staff photo by Jimmy Hill

Newspaper coverage of Nashville’s lunch counter sit-ins, 1960
for young activists who were determined to confront segregation in downtown businesses.

The first Nashville sit-in took place on February 13, 1960. Students from Fisk University, Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University, and the American Baptist Theological Seminary attempted, in peaceful fashion, to be served at whites-only downtown luncheon counters. Two months went by, hundreds of students were arrested, and some were beaten, but still they kept taking their places at the segregated counters. A consumer boycott of downtown stores spread through the African American community and put additional pressure on merchants. On April 19, an early-morning bombing destroyed Z. Alexander Looby’s home. In response, Diane Nash organized several thousand protesters to silently march to the courthouse to confront city officials. The public was horrified by the violent tactics of the extreme segregationists. The next day, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke to a large audience at Fisk. On May 10, 1960, a handful of downtown stores opened their lunch counters on an integrated basis as Nashville became the first major city in the South to begin desegregating its public facilities. The Nashville sit-in movement and the students’ disciplined use of nonviolent tactics served as a model for future action against segregation.

Activists in several Tennessee cities kept the pressure on restaurants, hotels, and transportation facilities that refused to drop the color barrier. High school and college students in Nashville were instrumental in organizing the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which trained many civil rights leaders during the 1960s. Diane Nash was one of the few women to hold a leadership position...
within civil rights organizations such as SNCC. Tennesseans participated in the Freedom Rides, in which groups of black and white passengers tried to integrate bus terminals across the South.

In 1965, A. W. Willis, Jr., of Memphis became the first African American representative elected to the General Assembly in sixty-five years. From 1959 to 1963, the struggle for voting rights centered on rural Fayette County, where 700 African American tenant families were forced off the land when they tried to register to vote. Community activists, such as Viola and John McFerren, helped organize a “tent city” where evicted tenants were fed and sheltered despite harassment and a trade ban by local white merchants. In 1968, Memphis sanitation workers broadened the struggle by going on strike against discriminatory pay and work rules. In support of the strike, Dr. King came to Memphis, and on April 4, he was assassinated by a sniper as he stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel. The 1960s thus ended on an ominous note, with historic strides having been made in race relations, but with much yet to be done.

The end of the Clement-Ellington era saw the demise of single-party domination in Tennessee politics. Beginning in 1966 with Howard Baker’s election to the U.S. Senate, Tennesseans turned increasingly toward the Republican Party.
Between 1968 and 1972, Tennessee voted for Richard Nixon twice and elected Winfield Dunn—the first Republican governor since 1921—and two Republican senators, Baker and William Brock. The Watergate scandal temporarily halted this trend. In the mid-1970s, Democrat Ray Blanton defeated Maryville attorney Lamar Alexander for governor, James Sasser won a Republican-held Senate seat, and Jimmy Carter carried the state’s vote for President. Howard Baker became a leader in the Senate and was eventually named White House Chief of Staff in the Reagan White House. In 1978, Alexander won the governor’s race; he then took office early because of questionable acts by the outgoing Blanton administration.

State government services had grown significantly since the New Deal and World War II, but particularly since the passage of the first sales tax in 1947. Governor McCord’s two percent tax, initially passed for schools and teachers, was raised to three percent in 1955. By the late 1950s, sales tax revenue had become the chief means of financing state government. In order to fund Governor Alexander’s school reform package in 1985, the Legislature raised the state sales tax to 5.5 percent. Local governments had the option to add to this percentage making Tennessee’s sales tax one of the highest in the nation.

In the late twentieth century, Tennessee carried on its long tradition of military service. From 1950 to 1953, more than 10,500 Tennesseans served in the Korean War, with 843 losing their lives in combat. The long Vietnam War of the 1960s and early 1970s cost 1,289 Tennessee lives and caused student unrest on campuses across
the state. One outstanding participant was Navy Captain (and later Vice Admiral) William P. Lawrence of Nashville, who was shot down over North Vietnam in 1967. Captain Lawrence was held captive for six years and spent part of the time in solitary confinement. Captain Lawrence’s reflections on his native state produced what the Legislature adopted as the state’s official poem shortly after his return.

The Persian Gulf War of 1990–1991 generated considerable excitement and support, as Tennesseans rallied around the twenty-four units mobilized for Operation Desert Storm at the Fort Campbell Army Base. More recently, Tennesseans have made major contributions to the Global War on Terror. In addition to thousands of regular army personnel, more than 14,000 Tennessee soldiers, sailors, and airmen (more than eighty-four percent of the entire Tennessee National Guard) have deployed to the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. As of October 2017, 148 Tennesseans in service of our nation have given their lives in the War on Terror.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Tennessee has enjoyed a period of business expansion and growth particularly in the automotive industry. In 1980, Nissan Corporation of Tokyo announced plans to build the largest truck assembly plant in the world in Smyrna. Nissan’s American corporate headquarters is now located in Williamson County. By 1994, sixty-nine Japanese manufacturers with investments in excess of $4 billion and more than 27,000 employees had established operations in Tennessee. Tennessee also landed the General Motors plant; construction on the $2.1 billion facility near Spring Hill was completed in 1987. Volkswagen announced in 2008 that it was building a major automobile production facility in Chattanooga, and the first automobiles rolled out of the factory in 2011. In January of 2019, Volkswagen announced that it was investing $800 million to build a new assembly line at its Chattanooga plant to build electric SUVs. The project is expected to create up to 1,000 new jobs at the plant and the first electric vehicles are expected to be produced in 2022.

Over the years, Tennesseans have made significant contributions to science. Two members of the Vanderbilt University faculty, Earl Sutherland in 1971 and Stanley Cohen in 1987, won Nobel Prizes for their pioneering medical research. In 1985, Dr. Margaret Rhea Seddon became the first Tennessean in space, eventually flying on three Space Shuttle missions. Edgar Bright Wilson, Jr., who was born in Gallatin, received the National Medal of Science in 1975 for his contributions to a field of chemistry called molecular spectroscopy. In 1997, the American Chemical Society created an annual award named in Wilson’s honor called the “E. Bright Wilson Award in Spectroscopy.” Astronaut William Shepherd from Oak Ridge, served as Commander of Expedition 1, the first crew on the International Space Station. As a result of his service as an astronaut, Shepherd received the Congressional Space Medal of Honor in 2003. In 2008, former vice president Albert Gore, Jr., was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work on global warming.

Tennessee has also produced a number of distinguished figures in literature. Robert Penn Warren, who lived in Clarksville and attended Vanderbilt University, received the 1947 Pulitzer Prize for his novel All the King’s Men. Warren also won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1958 and 1979. James Agee, an American novelist and poet, won the 1958 Pulitzer Prize for his autobiographical novel, A Death in the
Family. In 1977, Alex Haley of Henning was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *Roots*, the most successful book ever penned by a Tennessean and one largely responsible for reviving popular interest in family history.

Tennessee has also been an important place for producing a variety of music and performers. Few Americans have ever matched the personal popularity of Memphian Elvis Presley, the “King of Rock ’n’ Roll,” whose recordings for Memphis’s Sun Records Studio in the mid-1950s launched a new era in popular music. The classic rock ’n’ roll music of Elvis and his fellow performers at Sun Records, as well as the rhythm-and-blues “Memphis sound” represented by Stax Records, have achieved worldwide renown. Elvis’s home, Graceland, is the most visited celebrity museum in the country.

Similarly, Dolly Parton from Sevier County has become an icon in popular culture. As a country music performer, Dolly has earned nine Grammy Awards, ten Country Music Association Awards, and seven Academy of Country Music Awards. In 2005, Dolly was honored with the National Medal of Arts, the highest honor given by the U.S. government for excellence in the arts. One year later, in 2006, Dolly received the Kennedy Center Honor for her contributions to the arts. In 1990, Dolly started Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library. A book gifting program that mails free, high quality books to children from birth until they begin school, the Imagination Library has given away over 129 million books in the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia.

While Dolly Parton has had a major impact on the music industry, other Tennesseans have also made significant contributions. Singer and songwriter Tina Turner, from Nutbush, has won twelve Grammy Awards and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1991. She was also a recipient of the Kennedy Center Honor in 2005. Memphis native Justin Timberlake, has had many chart-topping songs, and has won ten Grammy Awards and nine Billboard Music Awards.

A new generation of Tennessee public servants rose to importance during the 1980s and 1990s. Women carved out a more prominent role, with Jane Eskind becoming the first woman to be elected to statewide political office as Public Service Commissioner in 1986. Martha Craig Daughtrey became the first woman on the Tennessee Supreme Court. Albert Gore, Jr.’s, 1976 election to the U.S. House of Representatives began a political career that would carry him to the vice presidency of the United States in 1992 and a run for the presidency in 2000. Gore lost that election by a handful of electoral votes and failed to carry his home state, although he won a majority of the nation’s popular vote. In 1982, Lamar Alexander won his second term as governor, becoming the first executive to serve consecutive four-year terms. His “Better Schools” program was one of the earliest and most significant attempts at fundamental school reform in the country. As a result of the program, Alexander was appointed by President Bush as Secretary of Education in 1990.

became the first woman from Tennessee to be elected to the United States Senate. Currently, she and Lamar Alexander serve as the two United States Senators from Tennessee. The November 2018 election was also notable for electing businessman William “Bill” Byron Lee from Williamson County as the 50th governor of Tennessee. Lee easily defeated former Nashville mayor Karl Dean for the position.
Sports have long been popular entertainment and a source of pride for Tennesseans. In 1960, Wilma Rudolph from St. Bethlehem (near Clarksville) became the first American woman to win three gold medals in track and field at a single Olympics. The University of Tennessee’s Lady Vols, under Coach Pat Head Summitt, set the standard of excellence for women’s collegiate basketball by winning eight national championships between 1987 and 2008. The football team of the University of Tennessee reached the pinnacle of college football in 1998 by going undefeated and being crowned National Champions. In 2014 and 2019, Vanderbilt University’s men’s baseball team won the NCAA Championship. Professional sports have come to Tennessee in a big way, with the NBA’s Memphis Grizzlies, the NHL’s Nashville Predators, and the NFL’s Tennessee Titans. The Titans went to the Super Bowl and two AFC Championships between 1998 and 2003, during which time they were the winningest team in the NFL. The Nashville Predators are also notable playoff contenders in the NHL. In 2017, the hockey team made headlines with a historic run through the Stanley Cup Playoffs before being edged out in the finals. The Predators continued their success in 2018 when they clinched the first division title in team history.

Tennessee has continued to experience strong economic growth and record low unemployment. Nashville has become a booming real estate market and nationally recognized travel destination. Tennessee’s low taxes and welcoming business climate have resulted in a significant revenue surplus. Politically, the state is strongly Republican, with the Republicans now holding supermajorities, or more than two-thirds of the seats, in both houses of the General Assembly.

Tennesseans draw great strength from their heritage, not only of great deeds and events, but of the more enduring legacy of community ties and respect for tradition.
One does not have to look hard for Tennessee’s significance in American history. The state played a key role in expanding the first frontier west of the Appalachian Mountains and provided the young nation with much of its political and military leadership, including the dominant figure of Andrew Jackson. Divided in loyalties and occupied for much of the Civil War, Tennessee was the main battleground in the western theater of that conflict. The early twentieth century witnessed clashes over cultural issues such as Prohibition, Women’s Suffrage, and school reform. World War II accelerated the changeover from an agricultural to an industrial and predominantly urban state. As older cultural byways fade, Tennessee has become home to some of the most advanced sectors of American business and technology. Our state’s mix of forward-looking innovation, great natural beauty, and a people solidly grounded in tradition and community has proven an irresistible allure for the rest of the country.

Acknowledgments

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