

Tennessee History Teacher Text

Part I

Created by The East Tennessee Historical Society

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Tennessee before European Arrival

The earliest inhabitants of Tennessee were hunter-gatherers who moved into the region near the end of the last Ice Age. These people, known as Paleo-Indians, used caves and rock shelters as temporary campsites. Paleo-Indians were hunter gatherers who hunted now-extinct animals such as mastodons. The remains of a mastodon with cut marks on the bone were discovered at the Coats-Hines site in Williams County. Thirty-four stone cutting tools were also found at the site.¹ The presence of stone tools and cutting marks provides evidence that Paleo-Indians lived in Tennessee.

As the climate warmed, the Archaic peoples, descendants of the Paleo-Indians, began to move into river valleys and eventually began small-scale farming. Chenopod, or lambsquarters, sunflowers and a type of squash were grown by Archaic farmers. Archaic people continued to gather hickory nuts, acorns and other plants as well. Archaic people hunted white-tailed deer using an atlatl, or spear thrower. The simple tool served as a lever which gave spears increased distance and speed.²

During the Woodland period, settlements and agriculture evolved and high quality pottery began to be created. Woodland people were the first to use bows and arrows for hunting in this region. As more crops were grown, populations expanded and large settlements were created. Pinson Mounds and Old Stone Fort are sites created during the Woodland period. The Pinson Mounds site in Madison County is made up of 17 mounds surrounded by an earthworks enclosure. While at least three of the mounds were used for burials, the majority seemed to serve a ceremonial purpose; also, the lack of everyday items such as pottery shards and stone tools suggests that the area was not a permanent settlement, but an area that was visited for specific ceremonial purposes. There is some evidence that the mounds were laid out according to the cardinal directions and in alignment for the summer solstice. The Old Stone Fort site in Coffee County seems to have had a similar ceremonial purpose.

¹ Jefferson Chapman, "Prehistoric American Indians in Tennessee." *McClung Research Notes*, Number 28, 2009. <https://mcclungmuseum.utk.edu/2009/01/01/prehistoric-american-indians/> Accessed 12 June 2018.

² Ibid.

The structure was initially assumed to have been built for military defense. However, later excavations proved this assumption to be false as the structure was built over several hundred years and the walls were too low to provide protection. Also, the large structure would have needed a large defensive force which most Woodland tribes did not have.³ While Woodland tribes grew some crops, they still depended on hunting and gathering for much of their food supply so they could not support a permanent defensive force in one location.

The Mississippian period, which lasted from roughly 900 to 1600 CE, saw the creation of larger ceremonial mounds, the development of chiefdoms, large-scale farming, and increased warfare. Mississippian people grew corn and beans to feed the large populations in towns. Social rank was determined by family ties. The chief, his family and related families led privileged lives. The mounds were often used as burial sites for high ranking individuals as well as ceremonial centers.⁴ The Chucalissa site in Memphis is the best known Mississippian mound site in Tennessee.

Spanish Exploration

The Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto's expedition was the first documented European exploration of Tennessee.⁵ De Soto's 1540 expedition was indicative of Spain's approach to creating an empire in the New World that began with Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Caribbean in 1492. Columbus, like most Europeans of his day, viewed the native peoples he encountered as inferior to Europeans. Columbus reported to King Ferdinand that upon arriving in the region he "took some of the natives by force, in order that they might learn and might give me information of whatever there is in these parts."⁶ The mistreatment of native peoples was repeated by later Spanish explorers including

³ Charles Faulkner, *The Old Stone Fort: Exploring an Archaeological Mystery* (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1971)

⁴ Chapman, "Prehistoric American Indians in Tennessee."

⁵ For more information on Tennessee's prehistoric inhabitants, see the history section of the [Tennessee Blue Book](#).

⁶ Christopher Columbus, "Letter to King Ferdinand of Spain, describing the results of the first voyage." 1493. University of Virginia, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/hns/garden/columbus.html>, accessed June 6, 2018.

Hernán Cortés who found the riches Columbus had promised but never delivered to the Spanish monarchs.

Cortés sailed for Mexico against the orders of the governor of Cuba in 1519. He quickly made an alliance with the Tlaxcaltec, a tribe who resented the demands of their Aztec overlords. Cortés and his allies entered the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan on November 8, 1519. Tenochtitlan, which was built on land reclaimed from Lake Texcoco, was home to roughly 200,000 people. The Spanish were awed by the wealth of the Aztecs and marvelled at the size and magnificence of the city. Three causeways connected the city to the mainland and two aqueducts provided residents with clean drinking water. The Spanish were forced out of the city in 1520, but Cortés and his allies returned in May of 1521 and laid siege to the city. After three months the city fell and Cortés became the ruler of an enormous territory known as New Spain.

In 1531, another conquistador, Francisco Pizarro, set out to conquer the immense Inca Empire of South America. The Inca emperor Atahualpa had only recently defeated his half brother during a bloody civil war that divided loyalties in the empire. Pizarro, following Cortés' example, made alliances with Atahualpa's enemies and took the emperor captive after a decisive victory at Cajamarca on November 16, 1532. Atahualpa had his followers turn over a vast ransom of more than 20 tons of gold and silver to Pizarro in exchange for his freedom. The Spanish took the treasure but did not free Atahualpa. He was executed on August 29, 1533. Despite continued resistance from the Inca, the Spanish established the viceroyalty of Peru to govern its new territory in South America.

A number of factors allowed Cortés and Pizarro to succeed in conquering two of the great civilizations of the Americas including steel weapons, horses, and written language. Perhaps their greatest advantage was their inadvertent introduction of deadly diseases to New World populations. Smallpox, bubonic plague, and other diseases were introduced into indigenous or native populations that had no natural immunity to them. Some scholars estimate that up to 90% of indigenous peoples

died as a result. Epidemics wiped out entire villages and left many indigenous peoples unable to resist Spanish conquest. As the Spanish solidified their control of New Spain and South America, mining and plantation agriculture became the most important economic activities. At first, some indigenous people were enslaved to serve as the labor force in mines and on plantations. However, their numbers rapidly declined due to disease and cruel treatment by the Spanish.⁷ This forced the Spanish to turn to a new source of labor: importing enslaved Africans. Other European countries including Portugal, France, and Great Britain would also enslave Africans as a source for labor in their New World colonies. Ultimately, over 12 million Africans were kidnapped and transported to the Americas during the era of the Transatlantic slave trade.⁸

The introduction of European diseases into North America had a profound effect on the American Indians. Diseases such as smallpox and flu were likely introduced in the early 1500s by fishermen exploiting the incredibly rich fishing grounds of the Grand Banks off the coast of Newfoundland. The fishermen probably came into contact with American Indians when coming ashore to replenish their supplies or preserve their catch. The newly introduced diseases quickly spread from coastal populations to interior regions. The arrival of permanent settlers from Britain in the early 1600s only intensified the process. The tremendous loss of life caused by these epidemics caused massive changes in American Indian societies. In the southeast, scholars believe that epidemic diseases brought an end to the great Mississippian, or mound-building societies, that had flourished in the fertile river valleys. Survivors began to band together and form new tribes.

The second great force of change for American Indians in the colonial era was the introduction of chattel slavery. Slavery existed in most American Indian societies prior to European contact but in a very different form. In American Indian society prisoners of war or debtors were often enslaved, but they could earn their freedom in a variety of ways. Importantly, their children were not considered to

⁷ For more information on the conquest of the Aztecs and Incas, please see *Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond. For more information on the role of disease, please see, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* by Alfred Crosby.

⁸ The website <http://www.enslavedpersonvoyages.org/> contains a wealth of information on the transAtlantic slave trade including searchable databases of the voyages and the names of enslaved people transported.

be enslaved. In chattel slavery, the enslaved person was seen as the personal property of the enslaver and could be bought or sold like any other form of property. Under the chattal slavery system, enslaved people were enslaved for life and their children were also enslaved for life. European settlers wanted enslaved laborers to fill the pressing need for labor in the colonies. Colonists would arm one group of American Indians with guns and supply them with ammunition in exchange for enslaved persons. The armed groups would then raid unarmed groups to acquire enslaved persons. This led the unarmed groups to seek weapons for protection which also had to be paid for in enslaved persons. The introduction of large scale chattel slavery in North America caused massive shifts in power among American Indians. Some groups moved repeatedly to avoid enslavement, while other groups simply disappeared from the historical record as the twin forces of disease and slavery decimated their societies.⁹

Tennessee's American Indian societies were transformed by the forces of disease and slavery in the period following DeSoto's expedition in 1541. For example, some scholars believe the name Tennessee comes from the Yuchi word "Tana-tsee" meaning a place where rivers come together. By the time British traders ventured into present day Tennessee in the early 1700s, the region was under the control of the Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, and Shawnee.

Cherokee

The Cherokee occupied a huge area that included present-day Tennessee as well as parts of many other states. Unlike their neighbors the Creeks and Chickasaws, who speak Muskogean languages, the Cherokee speak an Iroquoian language. This indicates that the Cherokee migrated to the southeast before the arrival of Europeans. Like all American Indians, the Cherokee were

⁹ Robbie Ethridge, "English Trade in Deerskins and Indian enslaved persons." New Georgia Encyclopedia. 02 October 2017. Web. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/english-trade-deerskins-and-indian-enslaved-persons> accessed 07 June 2018.

impacted by European diseases and enslavement. However, the Appalachian mountains provided the Cherokee with some protection from raiding parties. The Cherokee towns took in many refugees and soon formed the allied towns often described by British traders and soldiers: the Overhill Towns, the Middle Towns, the Out Towns, the Valley Towns, and the Lower Towns.¹⁰ The Overhill Towns were located along the Little Tennessee River in present day Monroe and Blount counties.

Cherokee political organization at this time puzzled the British who were used to European style monarchies in which one person, usually male, ruled a territory. Cherokee government was much more complex. Individual towns were ruled through democratic consensus and led by war chiefs, peace chiefs, and religious leaders.¹¹ Additionally, the towns sometimes worked together as part of a Cherokee nation or confederation but other times would take different paths due in part to their geographic locations.¹² The British also had trouble understanding the prominent role that women played in Cherokee society. Cherokee society was matrilineal, meaning that family ties and political status came through the mother. Fields and property passed from mothers to daughters, and Cherokee women had a voice in political decisions as well. Cherokee women could also divorce their husbands.¹³

The Cherokee religious and world view emphasized the need for balance and harmony with the natural world and with other Cherokee. The idea of balance strongly influenced the Cherokee legal system. Before 1800, Cherokee justice was based on the “blood law” or “law of revenge.”¹⁴ Blood law was similar to the Old Testament concept of “an eye for an eye.” For example, if a member of the Bird Clan killed a member of the Turtle Clan, the Turtle Clan could demand the life of a member of the Bird Clan.

¹⁰ Ethridge, "English Trade in Deerskins, ".

¹¹ William L. Anderson and Ruth Y. Wetmore, "Cherokee Origins and First European Contact." Encyclopedia of North Carolina. 2006. <https://www.ncpedia.org/ Cherokee/origins> accessed 07 June 2018.

¹² Boulware, Tyler, "Cherokee Indians." New Georgia Encyclopedia. 20 February 2018. accessed 07 June 2018.

¹³ Anderson and Wetmore, "Cherokee Origins"

¹⁴ Bob L. Blackburn, "From Blood Revenge to the Lighthorsemen: Evolution of Law Enforcement Institutions among the Five Civilized Tribes to 1861." American Indian Law Review Vol. 8, No. 1 (1980), pp. 49-63. Web <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20068138>. 07 June 2018.

Cherokee society was transformed by the arrival of British traders in the late 1600s. In order to acquire European goods, especially guns, the Cherokee became important players in the deerskin trade. British traders moved to the Cherokee towns and often married Cherokee women to solidify their place in Cherokee society. For example, John Ross's maternal grandfather and father were both white traders who settled among the Cherokee.¹⁵ By the 1740s, deerskins were South Carolina's second greatest export behind rice. By 1747, the deerskins exported had an estimated worth of £57,143 sterling.¹⁶ South Carolina's colonial government set the exchange rate for goods and deerskins; in 1751, a blanket was worth three buckskins or six doe skins.¹⁷ Many believe that the use of the slang term "bucks" to refer to money is a legacy of the colonial deerskin trade.

However, the relationship between the British and the Cherokee was volatile and fluctuated between periods of peaceful trade and warfare. Colonial records show many instances of American Indians complaining to the British officials that they were being cheated by the traders. While the traders complained that the prices were set so low, they made no profit from the trade. In 1730, English adventurer Sir Alexander Cuming arrived in South Carolina with the intention of re-establishing trade with the Cherokee. Cuming may have been acting on orders from King George II, or he may have been inserting himself into the situation in a bid to gain wealth and prestige.¹⁸ In any event, Cuming travelled into Cherokee territory and convinced them to recognize the authority of the king. Cuming endorsed the Cherokee Chief Moytoy as "emperor" of the Cherokee who would henceforth represent the Cherokee in all negotiations with the British. Cuming also extended an invitation for seven Cherokee to visit England and renew the treaty with the king.¹⁹ The Cherokee

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Mark D. Groover, "Deerskin Trade." South Carolina Encyclopedia. May 17, 2016. <http://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/deerskin-trade/> accessed Web. 07 June 2018.

¹⁷ Vickie Rozema, "Lists of the Prices of Goods." *Cherokee Voices: Early Accounts of Cherokee Life in the East*. (Winston-Salem NC: John F. Blair, 2002.) 18-19. It is extremely difficult to accurately convert historical totals into modern money, however a rough estimate is that South Carolina's 1757 deerskin trade would be worth \$12 million in today's money.

¹⁸ Ian McGibney, "Cuming, Alexander." North Carolina Encyclopedia. 2013. <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/cuming-alexander> accessed Web. 12 June 2018.

¹⁹ James Mooney, (1900) *Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees*. Reprint. (Nashville: Charles and Randy Elder Publishers, 1980.), 35.

delegation, including Attakullakulla known to the English as Little Carpenter, renewed the treaty known as the Articles of Friendship and Commerce before returning to South Carolina in September.²⁰

Treaties such as the Articles of Friendship and Commerce were part of the British plan to maintain their colonies and access to raw materials in North America despite a strong French presence on the continent. The British also traded with the Creeks and Chickasaws who had some settlements in present day Tennessee. The Creeks and Chickasaws were centered further south in present day Alabama and Mississippi respectively. The Shawnee hunted in Middle Tennessee, but mainly lived north of the Ohio River.

French and Indian War

Britain and France competed for land and resources in North America throughout the 1600's and early 1700s. Both nations wanted access to valuable natural resources, especially furs. In Europe, furs and skins were used for making clothing, hats and other items; beaver fur was especially valuable because it was waterproof. The British claimed land along the North American coast and along Hudson's Bay. The French claimed the lands along the St. Lawrence River, Great Lakes, and Mississippi River. As both nations expanded their settlements in the Ohio River Valley, conflict ensued. In 1755, British General Braddock was defeated at the Battle of the Monongahela by a force of both French and American Indian troops while attempting to reach Fort Duquesne. The global conflict between Britain and France between 1756 and 1763 is known as the Seven Years War. The fighting that took place in North America is known as the French and Indian War.

During the French and Indian War both the British and the French depended on their American Indian allies to help them fight in North America. This was especially important as the two European nations were also fighting in Europe, Cuba, the West Indies, India, and the Philippines. Frontier warfare between European settlers and American Indians led to increased anger and violence toward

²⁰ McGibney, "Cuming, Alexander."

all American Indians. Despite seeking American Indian tribes as allies, the British misunderstood American Indian culture, looked on American Indians as uncivilized, and often treated their allies poorly. The Cherokee had been strong allies of the British in the years leading up to the French and Indian War, however, a number of events during the conflict led to a breakdown in the alliance between the Cherokee and British.

Fort Loudoun

In 1756, the British began to build Fort Loudoun near the Cherokee town of Chota. The Cherokee were pleased to have the fort as protection against attacks from the French and their American Indian allies. However, the military alliance between the Cherokee and the British began to sour after the fort's construction began. A group of Cherokee travelled north in February 1756 to fight the Shawnee alongside 200 Virginian troops.²¹ Conditions were brutal, and a lack of supplies forced the group to kill their horses. When the returning Cherokee encountered roaming horses, they took the horses, reasoning that it was only fair since their own horses were lost while serving the interests of the colonists. However, the colonists did not share the Cherokee point of view; they pursued the Cherokee and killed several men. Seeking vengeance, young warriors then attacked and killed several backcountry settlers in South Carolina.²² For the Cherokee, these deaths were justified under the concept of "blood law" as they viewed all settlers as belonging to the same tribe or clan.

Governor Lyttleton demanded that every Cherokee who had taken part in the attacks be surrendered for execution, including the chiefs of Citico and Tellico. Though the Cherokee wanted to avoid all-out war on the frontier, they could not hand over their leaders.²³ A group of 38 Cherokee leaders, including Oconostota, traveled to South Carolina in 1759 to seek peace with Governor Lyttleton, but he instead had them imprisoned at Fort Prince George. This action angered the

²¹ Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 41.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 42.

Cherokee; even enraging Peace Chief Attakullakulla who had strongly supported the British. Attakullakulla arranged the release of the three most prominent captives, including the war leader Oconostota, by agreeing to turn over the Cherokee men who had killed the white settlers. When Fort Prince George's commander, Richard Coytmore, refused to release the remaining prisoners, Oconostota's warriors killed him. In revenge, the soldiers in the fort killed the remaining Cherokee prisoners. After the deaths of the Cherokee prisoners, the Cherokee near Fort Loudoun surrounded the fort and cut off the soldiers' supply of food. On August 7, 1760, Captain Paul Demere was forced to surrender to the Cherokee at Chota; the terms of surrender stipulated that the Cherokee promised to allow the soldiers and their families to leave in peace as long as the troops left their cannons and ammunition at the fort. However, the British tried to hide the cannons and ammunition before leaving. This angered the Cherokee who attacked the retreating soldiers on August 10, 1760. The Cherokee killed 23 soldiers, 3 women, and took 120 hostages. The Cherokee viewed the deaths as justified since the British had killed Cherokee prisoners at Fort Prince George and had not kept the terms of the surrender. The British referred to the event as the Fort Loudoun Massacre.

By this point, the British had won several important victories against the French in the north including capturing Quebec, the French capital. This allowed the British to focus on the Cherokee, sending 2,000 troops into Cherokee territory where they destroyed 15 towns and the Cherokee food supply for winter. By 1762, the Cherokee surrendered and peace was restored, but hard feelings lingered. In 1763, the war between Britain and France officially ended with the Treaty of Paris. As a result of the French and Indian War, France lost all its territories in North America except for a few islands in the Caribbean. Spain conceded Florida to the British but gained the French lands west of the Mississippi River. Britain gained all of France's lands east of the Mississippi River. American Indians who had sided with the French feared how they would be treated by the British. After years of fighting France, the British found themselves victorious but deeply in debt. The British knew that continued warfare with American Indians would further increase the debt. Therefore, they issued the

Proclamation of 1763 which said that no British subject could settle west of the Appalachian Mountains. However, many settlers simply ignored the law and continued to move west onto Cherokee lands.

Longhunters and Explorers

Until 1750, the rugged Appalachian Mountains served as a very effective barrier to the westward expansion of the colonies. In that year, Dr. Thomas Walker, a physician turned land speculator, made a monumental discovery. While working for the Loyal Company of Virginia, Walker led an expedition southward along the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, and discovered the Cumberland Gap. Cumberland Gap, a natural passage through the mountains, became a gateway to the West for generations of explorers and settlers. One group that made use of the Cumberland Gap as a gateway to the west were the longhunters. These hunters, enticed by circulating rumors of bountiful game across the mountains, embarked on hunting expeditions typically lasting six to seven months, setting out in October and returning in April or May. The longhunters were responsible for the majority of geographical knowledge the American colonists accumulated about the Trans-Appalachian West. As tales of their adventures spread throughout the colonies, the longhunters attracted the attention of land speculators.

Land speculators purchased land at low prices with the intent to sell the land for higher prices in the future. Land speculation companies saw their opportunity to gain lands west of the mountains with the discovery of the Cumberland Gap. These companies began hiring longhunters as surveyors to map the Trans-Appalachian lands while on hunting expeditions. The most famous of these hunters was Daniel Boone, who would ultimately explore and map vast areas of Northeast Tennessee and southern Kentucky while working for land speculator Richard Henderson.

Settlement of Tennessee

Tennessee's first permanent white settler, William Bean, established a small settlement along the Watauga branch of the Holston River in 1769. Other settlers followed, including James Robertson and John Sevier. The Watauga Settlement found itself in difficult circumstances when a survey revealed that it was outside the boundaries of Virginia and in violation of the Proclamation of 1763. Whether the settlers had truly believed their settlement to be in Virginia or had decided to skirt the law is debatable.²⁴ In any event, the government ordered the settlers off Cherokee land. The settlers, unwilling to give up the community they had worked to establish, decided to strike a deal with the Cherokee. The Watauga settlers arranged to lease the land from the Cherokee for a period of ten years. However, the Wataugans were still beyond the boundary of any organized government. To solve this problem they created the Watauga Association in 1772. This group of white, male settlers worked together to create a system of laws for their settlement based on the laws of Virginia.²⁵ The laws were written in a document called the Watauga Compact. The settlement had five elected officials called commissioners who were in charge of recording legal documents such as land titles and enforcing the law.

The Watauga Association made no claims of independence from Great Britain. Even so, the Wataugans were under the authority of no other government and thus represented the first independent white government in the British colonies. In 1774, Lord Dunmore, the royal governor of Virginia, wrote to the British official in charge of the Americas about the Wataugans. He described the Wataugans' refusal to leave their lands, their agreement with the Cherokee and their extra-legal government. Further, Dunmore stated that the Wataugans' state formation "sets a dangerous example

²⁴ Jeff Biggers, *The United States of Appalachia*. (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2006), 52.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

to the people of America, of forming governments distinct from and independent of his majesty's authority."²⁶

With the aid of Boone's exploration reports, Richard Henderson formulated a plan to purchase huge amounts of land from the Cherokee in order to establish his own colony. Completely ignoring the Proclamation of 1763, Henderson completed the Transylvania Purchase in March 1775 at Sycamore Shoals. The Cherokee gave up their claims to the Cumberland River Valley and most of modern Kentucky in exchange for trade goods valued at £10,000. Inspired by Henderson's Transylvania Purchase, the Wataugans also arranged to purchase their land from the Cherokee for £2,000.²⁷ As part of the agreement, white settlers would be allowed to use a path through the Cumberland Gap. Immediately, Henderson dispatched Boone and a team of 30 axmen to carve a path through the heavily forested area. By April, Boone's team had completed the path, which was known as the Wilderness Road.²⁸ Though Henderson's Transylvania Purchase was later largely invalidated by the Virginia assembly, it did lead to the creation of the Cumberland Settlement.

With the opening of the Wilderness Road, settlers began to pour into the western regions. Many of the new settlers pushed further west than Boone or the Wataugans. Thomas Sharpe Spencer, a longhunter renowned for his enormous physical strength and stature, traveled as far as the Cumberland River in what is now Middle Tennessee. In 1776, Spencer and a small party of companions built several cabins and planted the first crop along the Cumberland River. Though most of the party returned to the east, Spencer remained in the area until 1779, famously spending his final winter along the river living in a hollowed out sycamore tree.²⁹ Though forced to abandon his initial venture, Spencer returned in the winter of 1779-1780 as part of the expedition commissioned by

²⁶ Ibid., 57.

²⁷ David L. Cockrell, "Watauga Settlement." North Carolina Encyclopedia. 2013. <https://www.ncpedia.org/watauga-settlement> accessed. 12 June 2018.

²⁸ Michael Toomey, "Daniel Boone." Tennessee Encyclopedia, March 7, 2018. <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/daniel-boone/> accessed 12 June 2018.

²⁹ Walter Durham, "Thomas S. Spencer." Tennessee Encyclopedia, March 1, 2018. <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/thomas-sharp-spencer/> accessed 12 June 2018.

Richard Henderson and led by Capt. James Robertson and Col. John Donelson with the intent of founding a permanent settlement along the Cumberland River.

Life on the Frontier

Many different factors motivated the settlers who crossed the Appalachian Mountains into the future state of Tennessee. The most important factor was economic opportunity in the forms of trade, farmland and land speculation. While tensions with the Cherokee remained high, the potential profits from trade lured many people to the west. Nathaniel Gist, or Guess, the father of Sequoyah, explored the region with his father in the early 1750s and established strong ties with the Cherokee. Gist eventually set up a trading post on the Long Island of the Holston River.³⁰ Several of the early traders brought enslaved men to assist in transporting furs across the mountains.³¹ Glowing reports of the fertile land from longhunters and explorers such as Daniel Boone also encouraged people to move west. Finally, men like Richard Henderson and, later, William Blount saw an opportunity to make fortunes through land speculation. Speculators purchased land at low prices with the hope that they could see the land double or triple in value within a few years.

Another factor that motivated settlement of the west was the desire to escape high taxes and supposedly corrupt colonial governments. The Regulator movement in western North Carolina challenged the colonial government by intimidating and harassing colonial officials considered to be corrupt. North Carolina Governor Tryon sent the militia to enforce the law which led to the Battle of Alamance.³² The Regulators lost the battle, and many of the survivors moved west rather than submit to the government.³³ Many enslaved people were brought to the settlements by their enslavers.

³⁰ Biggers, *The United States of Appalachia*, 32-33.

³¹ Edward McCormack, *Slavery on the Tennessee Frontier*. (Tennessee American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1977), 2.

³² ANCHOR. "The Regulators." North Carolina Encyclopedia <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/regulators> accessed 12 June 2018.

³³ Biggers, *The United States of Appalachia*, 52.

William Bean, John Carter and John Sevier all used enslaved labor on their farms and in their households.³⁴ In his diary, John Donelson wrote of

“Capt. Hutchings’ negro man” who died “being much frosted in his feet & legs.” He also related the story of Mr. Jennings who escaped from an attack on the river by ordering “his wife, a son nearly grown, a young man who accompanied them, & his two negroes to throw all his goods into the river, to lighten their boat...But before they had accomplished their object, his son, the young man & the negro man jumped out of the boat & left them. He thinks the young man & the negro were wounded before they left the boat. Mrs. Jennings, however, & the negro woman succeeded in unloading the boat.”³⁵

In addition, the westbound settlers also had to deal with the arrival of murderers, horse thieves, and other criminals who fled across the mountains to escape prosecution by colonial governments.³⁶

Most of Tennessee’s early settlers came from North Carolina, Pennsylvania or Virginia with their belongings carefully packed in a Conestoga or Virginia Road Wagon. These heavy wagons had high curved sides which prevented cargo from sliding out on steep mountain slopes and functioned like boats when fording rivers.³⁷ Once across the mountains, settlers often turned to the area’s rivers as an easy way to continue their journey west. In 1779, John Donelson led a group of flatboats down the Tennessee River and up the Cumberland River to join James Robertson at the future site of Nashville. Settlers brought essential items such as seeds for planting and tools for building cabins in the wilderness. Cattle, pigs, and other animals were driven along with the wagons or transported in cages. Weapons and ammunition were also vital for protection against both wild animals and hostile American Indians. Wealthier families often brought luxury items such as fine china or silver.

³⁴ McCormack, *Slavery on the Tennessee Frontier*, 4.

³⁵ John Donelson, *Diary*. Tennessee State Library and Archives.

<https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/tfd/id/585/rec/12> accessed 4 June 2021

³⁶ Biggers, *The United States of Appalachia*, 55.

³⁷ National Museum of American History. “Conestoga Wagon.” Smithsonian.

http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_842999 accessed 12 June 2018.

Once settlers arrived at a suitable location, the hard work of creating a homestead in the wilderness began. Trees were cut and notched to build a one-room log cabin. Kitchens were usually separate buildings because of the risk of fire. As families prospered, cabins were enlarged and glass windows were added.³⁸ In the early frontier period many settlers enclosed their homes within a sturdy log wall for protection. These forts, or “stations,” became places of refuge during attacks and also provided travelers with a place to rest, acquire information, and resupply as necessary. Sites like James White’s Fort in Knoxville and Mansker’s Station in Goodlettsville interpret these early frontier dwellings and community centers.

Because life on the frontier was difficult, many settlers came in large groups including members of extended families; other families moved into established communities where they already had family or friends. James Robertson cleared fields near the Watauga settlement on the recommendation of his friend Daniel Boone and then brought his family from North Carolina.³⁹ Robertson later moved his family again to the Cumberland Settlement near present day Nashville. Frontiersmen like Robertson and Boone spent a great deal of time away from home. As a result, frontier women often had to do the planting, plowing and harvesting in addition to preparing food, weaving cloth, making clothes, preserving food, making soap and candles, caring for children, and many other daily tasks. Frontier families also faced danger from American Indians hostile to their presence. The Knoxville Gazette reported that the Titsworth family was attacked on October 4, 1794. Isaac Titsworth’s wife and one of his children were killed. John Titsworth, his wife and one child were also killed. Four children and one enslaved person were taken captive. Three of the children were later scalped. Peggy, the 13 year old daughter of Isaac Titsworth, and Mingo, an enslaved person of 15 or 16, remained with their captors.

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³⁸ Tennessee4me, “Housing.” Tennessee State Museum. http://www.tn4me.org/article.cfm/a_id/250/minor_id/79/major_id/25/era_id/3 accessed 12 June 2018.

³⁹ Biggers, *The United States of Appalachia*, 50.

⁴⁰ Steve Cotham, transcriber. “Births, Marriages, Deaths and Scandals From Early Knoxville Newspapers, 1794 Part 3”, Tennessee Ancestors, Volume 5, Number 1, 1997. 12.

Slavery on the frontier was much different than the plantation slavery that developed in the 1800s. Frontier enslaved persons worked alongside their masters in the fields and helped defend settlements from American Indians during attacks. ⁴¹ On April 28, 1793 a man named Abraham, enslaved by Anthony Bledsoe, survived an attack while plowing Bledsoe's field. The white man working with Abraham was killed, but Abraham managed to circle around and kill one of the attackers before making his escape. On the frontier, enslaved people often had access to weapons for defense or for hunting. William Moffet of Grangier county appeared in court to certify that Pau, whom he enslaved, had permission to carry "fire armes & ammunition for the purpose of killing Squirrels & other wild game on the premises of Said Moffet."⁴²

The more familiar relationship between enslaved people and their enslavers did not change the fundamental inequalities of the slave system. The Knoxville Gazette published many advertisements in which land was offered for sale in exchange for "Cash, Negroes or Horses."⁴³ A lottery in Greene County offered land, horses, cattle and two enslaved people, Joe and Luce as prizes.⁴⁴ Enslaved people actively resisted slavery through legal action such as Margaret Lee who petitioned the Washington District Superior Court for freedom and her children's freedom in 1795 on the basis that she was born free, but stolen from her home in Boston in 1774 and taken to Maryland where she was sold.⁴⁵ Other enslaved people sought freedom by running away. The Knoxville Gazette contains many advertisements for runaways like Jem, who was captured while trying to reach the Cumberland settlement where his former enslaver, Joseph Davis, lived.⁴⁶ It seems likely that Jem's true objective was not to be reunited with Joseph Davis, but with his family.

⁴¹ Tennessee4me, "Slavery." Tennessee State Museum.

http://www.tn4me.org/article.cfm/a_id/260/minor_id/81/major_id/25/era_id/3 accessed 12 June 2018.

⁴² East Tennessee Roots, "Slavery in East Tennessee." <http://www.easttennesseeroots.com/Slavery.html> accessed 7 June 2021.

⁴³ Steve Cotham,transcriber "Births, Marriages, Deaths and Scandals From Early Knoxville Newspapers, 1795 Part 1", Tennessee Ancestors, Volume 5, Number 1, 1989. 19.

⁴⁴ Steve Cotham,transcriber "Births, Marriages, Deaths and Scandals From Early Knoxville Newspapers, 1794 Part 2, Tennessee Ancestors, Volume 4 Number 2, 1988. 113.

⁴⁵ "Petition of Slave Margaret Lee." East Tennessee Roots, Volume 6 Number 4. 1989. 180.

⁴⁶ Steve Cotham,transcriber "Births, Marriages, Deaths and Scandals From Early Knoxville Newspapers, 1795 Part 1", Tennessee Ancestors, Volume 5, Number 1, 1989. 24-25.

The Knoxville Gazette recorded many instances of enslaved men and women being killed or taken prisoner by the Cherokee, Creeks or Chickasaws. On December 23, 1793, Roger Oats and Nicholas Ball were killed in present day west Knox County. The assailants took with them “four horses from the waggon, and a mulatto boy, 14 years of age.” A later edition of the Gazette reported that the boy was “lately found dead near the place where he was taken.”⁴⁷ On June 9, 1794, a large party left Knoxville for Natches. The boat was boarded at Muscle Shoals, the white travellers on board were killed and the 22 enslaved people were taken prisoner.⁴⁸ Enslaved men and women, though often nameless in the historical record, faced the same dangers as other settlers and played an important role in the eventual success of the settlements.⁴⁹

Settlers and the Cherokee

The relationship between the Cherokee and the settlers of Tennessee was as complex and diverse as the individuals involved. Attakullakulla, Cherokee peace chief and diplomat, played a key role in Tennessee’s early history. By the time of the Transylvania and Watauga Purchases, Attakullakulla was an old man who had spent his life trying to find a way for the Cherokee and Europeans to peacefully coexist. Felix Walker, a young adventurer present during the Transylvania Purchase, described Attakullakulla in detail.

Attakullakulla, the Indian name, known to the white people by the name of Little Carpenter- in allusion, say the Indians, to his deep, artful, and ingenious diplomatic abilities, ably demonstrated in negotiating treaties with the white people, and influence in their national councils; like as a white carpenter could make every notch and joint fit in wood, so he could

⁴⁷ Steve Cotham, transcriber “Births, Marriages, Deaths and Scandals From Early Knoxville Newspapers, 1794 Part 1”, Tennessee Ancestors, Volume 3, Number 3, 1987. 162-164.

⁴⁸ Steve Cotham, transcriber. “Births, Marriages, Deaths and Scandals From Early Knoxville Newspapers, 1794 Part 2”, Tennessee Ancestors, Volume 4, Number 2, 1988. 118.

⁴⁹ Biggers, *The United States of Appalachia*, 50-51.

bring all his views to fill and fit their places in the political machinery of his nation. He was the most celebrated and influential Indian among all the tribes then known.⁵⁰

Attakullakulla first appeared in the historical record as one of the seven Cherokee who visited England to renew a treaty known as the Articles of Friendship and Commerce in 1730. Attakullakulla helped to create a military alliance between the Cherokee and the British during the French and Indian War and tried to stop the hostilities that arose when the alliance broke down. It was also Attakullakulla who negotiated the treaty that ended the war between the British and Cherokee that broke out after the Fort Loudoun Massacre. Attakullakulla was one of several Cherokee leaders who agreed to the Transylvania and Watauga Purchases in 1775. His name and mark are clearly visible on the Watauga Purchase document held by the Tennessee State Library and Archives.

Another Cherokee leader who favored peace with the settlers was the Beloved Woman Nanye-hi who was also known by the English name Nancy Ward. Nanye-hi was born in the town of Chota in 1738. Her mother was Tame Doe, the sister of Attakullakulla. In 1755, Nanye-hi accompanied her husband into battle with the Creek. When he was killed in the battle, Nanye-hi took up his gun, rallied the other warriors and led a charge which resulted in victory for the Cherokee.⁵¹ Because of her bravery, Nanye-hi was chosen as Ghighau or Beloved Woman. The Beloved Woman played an important role in Cherokee society. She was leader of the Council of Women, served on the Council of Chiefs, and decided the fate of prisoners.⁵² It was in this role that Nanye-hi saved the life of Lydia Bean, wife of Tennessee's first settler William Bean, in 1775.⁵³ Lydia Bean taught Nanye-hi how to make butter and cheese before her return to her home. Nanye-hi was later credited with introducing dairying to the Cherokee.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Felix Walker, "Narrative of an Adventure in Kentucky in the Year 1775." *The Western Journal and Civilian*. 11 (1854): 392-394. Internet Archive accessed June 23, 2016.

<https://archive.org/details/westernjournala00cobbgoog>

⁵¹ David Ray Smith, "Nancy Ward." Tennessee Encyclopedia. March 1, 2018.

<https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/nancy-ward/> accessed 13 June 2018.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 204.

⁵⁴ Smith, "Nancy Ward."

Nanye-hi married English trader Bryant Ward in the late 1750s and was thereafter known to the English as Nancy Ward. Nanye-hi, like her uncle Attakullakulla, favored peace between the Cherokee and the settlers. She twice sent warnings to John Sevier of planned attacks by the Cherokee. She also spoke during the treaty negotiations in 1781 and again in 1785 as the Treaty of Hopewell was being negotiated.⁵⁵

Unlike Attakullakulla and Nanye-hi, Cherokee leader Dragging Canoe opposed attempts at peace with the settlers and bitterly resented the loss of Cherokee lands. Dragging Canoe was the son of Attakullakulla. Legend says that as a young boy he begged his father to allow him to accompany a war party. Attakullakulla refused, but the determined boy hid in a canoe where he was discovered. Attakullakulla told him that he could go, if he could carry the canoe to the water. The boy could not lift the heavy canoe, so he began to drag it towards the water. Thereafter, he was known as Dragging Canoe.⁵⁶ Dragging Canoe vehemently opposed the Transylvania and Watauga Purchases. He saw the start of the American Revolution as an opportunity to drive the settlers off of Cherokee lands. The Cherokee were defeated and ceded more land in the treaties that followed. Dragging Canoe refused to accept defeat and left the Cherokee towns with like-minded warriors to found a new town on Chickamauga Creek near present -day Chattanooga.⁵⁷ Creek and Shawnee warriors joined the group which eventually expanded to five towns. The Chickamauga continued to attack settlements in East and Middle Tennessee until their towns were destroyed in 1794.⁵⁸

Tennessee during the American Revolution

The American Revolution brought profound changes to the settlements in East Tennessee. It should come as no surprise that settlers who defied the British government by settling west of the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Patricia Bernard Ezell, "Dragging Canoe." Tennessee Encyclopedia. October 8, 2017. <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/dragging-canoe/> accessed 13 June 2018.

⁵⁷ Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 54.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Appalachian Mountains, privately purchasing the land from the Cherokee and creating their own independent government, would endorse the Patriot cause. However, the outbreak of fighting at Lexington and Concord, which came only one month after the Transylvania and Watauga Purchases, made the settlers realize how precarious their situation was. The settlers in Watauga, Nolichucky and Carter's Valley and other settlements formed a Committee of Safety and later took the name Washington District.⁵⁹

The British intended to use American Indian allies to attack settlements along the frontier and began arming warriors from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico with hatchets, guns and ammunition.⁶⁰ The Cherokee and many other tribes sided with the British for a number of reasons. First, since the removal of the French at the end of the French and Indian War, the British had been the key trading partner of most tribes. Secondly, many American Indians had close personal or family ties with British traders and Indian agents. For example, John Stuart, British Indian Agent during the Revolution, was spared during the Fort Loudoun Massacre because of his friendship with Attakullakulla. Lastly, the British government had made clear efforts to stop the flow of settlers into American Indian lands.

When the British government repeated its demand that the settlers abandon their lands or face war with the Cherokee in the spring of 1776, the settlers took action. The settlers asked North Carolina for help in a document known as the Watauga Petition. North Carolina eventually agreed to assist the Washington District. However, before help could arrive, Dragging Canoe and his allies launched a series of attacks against the settlements in 1776 known as the Cherokee War of 1776. The settlers were warned of the attack by Nanye-hi and had time to prepare.⁶¹ The settlers defeated the force led by Dragging Canoe at the Battle of Long Island. The Wataugans held out against a two week siege of their fort at Sycamore Shoals. The Carter's Valley settlers fled, allowing the Cherokee to easily raid

⁵⁹ Paul Bergeron, Stephen Ash and Jeanette Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 24.

⁶⁰ Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 47.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

and burn the homesteads there.⁶² Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia retaliated by sending militia forces to attack Cherokee towns in the region. By 1777, more than 50 Cherokee towns had been burned and hundreds of Cherokee had been killed or sold into slavery. The Treaty of Long Island negotiated in 1777 ended the hostilities, but also created a rift within the Cherokee which resulted in Dragging Canoe and others moving south to Chickamauga.⁶³

The Battle of King's Mountain

By 1780 the British had turned their attention to the southern colonies, in part because of the large number of loyalists, or Tories who lived there. The British won an impressive victory over the Patriot force at Camden in August of 1780. Cornwallis, the British commander, then sent Major Patrick Ferguson to suppress rebellion in the backcountry. Ferguson selected a prisoner to carry a message back to the rebels across the mountains, "If you do not desist from your opposition to the British arms, I will march over the mountains, hang your leaders, and lay waste to your country with fire and sword."

⁶⁴ Upon hearing of Ferguson's threat, Isaac Shelby, leader of the North Carolina mountain militia, immediately consulted with John Sevier at Sycamore Shoals. Shelby and Sevier decided to combine their forces and take the battle across the mountains to Ferguson. The men agreed to meet at Sycamore Shoals along the Watauga River on September 25, 1780. Eventually over 1,000 militia or Overmountain Men, including some from Virginia, gathered at Sycamore Shoals present-day Elizabethton. Before leaving, the men heard an inspirational sermon from Presbyterian minister and educator Samuel Doak. Doak reminded the men of the biblical story of Gideon whose small force defeated the larger Midianite army.⁶⁵

⁶² Bergeron, Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 27-28.

⁶³ Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 53-54.

⁶⁴ Biggers, *The United States of Appalachia*, 70.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

Armed with inspiration from Doak and 500 pounds of gunpowder, the men began the difficult march across the mountains. Two defector's from Sevier's command warned Ferguson of the approaching force. Ferguson ordered his 1,100 men, who were part of the Tory militia, to march to King's Mountain, just south of the border between North Carolina and South Carolina. Upon arriving Ferguson reportedly said, "I am on King's Mountain, I am king of that mountain, and God Almighty could not drive me from it."⁶⁶ The Overmountain men reached King's Mountain on October 7, 1780. The force encircled the mountain and began to fight their way up using the trees for cover and giving their war cry as they advanced. Both these tactics had been learned from years of warfare with the Cherokee. Ferguson's men fired as the Patriots advanced, but because they were aiming downhill, most of the shots went over their heads. Patriot sharpshooters methodically annihilated the British forces with their deadly accurate long rifles. Within an hour, the Patriots reached the top of the mountain. Knowing defeat was inevitable; Ferguson mounted his horse in an attempt to fight his way through the lines and escape. Ferguson was fatally shot and the remainder of his forces surrendered.

Several men later claimed to have shot Ferguson, including Essius Bowman, a free Black militiaman from the Virginia Blue Ridge.⁶⁷ Bowman was one of five Black men identified in pension records as having served with the Overmountain Men at the Battle of King's Mountain. In addition to Bowman, Andrew Ferguson and Primus served as free men. John Broddy was the enslaved servant of Colonel William Campbell and Ishmael Titus was an enslaved man who fought as a substitute for his enslaver Lawrence Ross. Titus was later given his freedom in return for his service⁶⁸ The Overmountain men had won a resounding and important victory.

Following the battle, 30 of the prisoners were tried for atrocities committed prior to the battle and 9 prisoners were hanged before Shelby stopped the proceedings. The victory at King's Mountain

⁶⁶ Randall Jones, "The Overmountain Men and the Battle of Kings Mountain." North Carolina Encyclopedia <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/overmountain-men-and-battle> accessed 13 June 2018.

⁶⁷ Biggers, *The United States of Appalachia*, 78.

⁶⁸ National Park Service, "African-Americans in the Revolution." <https://www.nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/upload/Complete-LP-African-Americans-in-the-Revolution.pdf> accessed 07 June, 2021.

had two important effects. First, news of the victory reinvigorated the Patriot spirit throughout the colonies. Years later Thomas Jefferson referred to it as the “joyful annunciation of that turn of the tide of success which terminated the Revolutionary War, with the seal of independence.”⁶⁹ Secondly, it caused Cornwallis to reevaluate his strategy and retreat to South Carolina and ultimately to Yorktown. British general Sir Henry Clinton later called the Battle of King’s Mountain, “The first link in a chain of evils that followed each other in regular succession until they at last ended in the total loss of America.”⁷⁰

The Cumberland Settlement

Henderson’s Transylvania Purchase of 1775 was an exercise in sheer audacity as Henderson was operating solely on his own authority. The roughly 20 million acres lay in what is now middle Tennessee and Kentucky. While Henderson was not able to convince Virginia and North Carolina to recognize his entire claim, he was able to claim the region near the Cumberland River in Middle Tennessee.⁷¹ In 1779, Henderson planned a settlement in order to take advantage of the region’s rich natural resources including fertile soil and abundant animal life. Henderson’s settlement was named the Cumberland Settlement for the Cumberland River which served as the main transportation route in the region. Henderson gave the difficult task of establishing the settlement to James Robertson and John Donelson. Donelson was an experienced land surveyor and veteran of the Cherokee War. James Robertson was one of first Watauga settlers and had served as one of the five magistrates established under the Watauga Compact. Robertson had also served as commander of Watauga Fort during the Cherokee War.⁷²

⁶⁹ Biggers, *The United States of Appalachia*, 79.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁷¹ Terry Weeks, “Transylvania Purchase.” Tennessee Encyclopedia. October 8, 2017. <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/transylvania-purchase/> accessed 13 June 2018.

⁷² *Ibid.*

Henderson had a two part plan for settling the Cumberland region. First, Robertson and a small group of Wataugans traveled overland in the spring of 1779 to select a site for the settlement near French Lick. French Lick was a natural salt lick along the Cumberland River that had been the location of a French trading post. In December of 1779, Robertson and the men returned and built cabins and Fort Nashborough in preparation for the arrival of Donelson's party in the spring of 1780.⁷³ Donelson's party of 30 families had the task of transporting the supplies the new settlement would need to survive including farm tools and household goods. He was also responsible for the safety of many women and children including his and Robertson's families. Additionally, over 30 enslaved people were part of the group. Because of the difficulty in crossing the Cumberland Plateau, Donelson's party took an indirect route by way of the Holston, Tennessee, Ohio and Cumberland rivers. Donelson's group left Watauga on December 22, 1779. Donelson kept a journal during the four month long journey in which he recorded a number of difficulties the travelers faced including: extreme cold, rough waters, an outbreak of smallpox and fighting with the Chickamauga.⁷⁴ On April 24, 1780, Donelson's party arrived at the settlement after traveling over 1,000 miles.

Like Watauga before it, the Cumberland Settlement existed outside the boundaries and government of any colony. Therefore, on May 1, 1780 Richard Henderson drew up the Cumberland Compact. The compact set up a form of government similar to that of the Watauga Association. Each station in the settlement was allowed to elect men to serve on the 12 person committee known at the "Tribunal of Notables." These "Notables" then carried out the functions of government including enforcing law and order and recording land claims.⁷⁵ The Cumberland Compact served as the basis for government in the settlement until North Carolina created Davidson County in 1783.⁷⁶ Almost immediately the settlement came under attack from the Chickamauga. In April 1781, they attacked Fort Nashborough and drove off the horses found outside the walls. A short time later, the settlers

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Bergeron, Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 30-32.

⁷⁵ Kenneth Fieth, "Cumberland Compact." Tennessee Encyclopedia. October 8, 2017. <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/cumberland-compact/> accessed 13 June 2018

⁷⁶ Bergeron, Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*,34.

gave chase, but were attacked by a large party of American Indians. According to legend, Charlotte Robertson, wife of James Robertson, saved the men by releasing the hunting dogs inside the fort to attack the American Indians. The men were able to return to the fort, but 11 men were killed in what came to be called the Battle of the Bluffs.⁷⁷ The danger eventually led Donelson to move his family and enslaved people back to the relative safety of Kentucky. Donelson continued to travel to the area and was killed along the Barren River in 1785.⁷⁸ James Robertson stayed in the Cumberland Settlement, but lost two brothers and two sons to the fighting before it ended in 1794. Robertson is often called the “Father of Middle Tennessee” for his contributions to the region’s development.⁷⁹

State of Franklin

Even before the Revolutionary War was over, Continental Congress had begun to plan for independence by creating a new government in a document called the Articles of Confederation. The government created by the Articles reflected the fear many leaders had of a powerful central government. The Articles of Confederation were approved by Continental Congress in 1777, but immediately ran into difficulty in getting the states to ratify the document. The main issue that held up ratification was land claims west of the Appalachians. A number of states, including Virginia and Massachusetts, claimed that their charters gave them vast areas of land west of the Appalachians. Maryland refused to ratify unless the states gave up their claims and accepted that the western lands belonged to the United States government. Eventually, Virginia gave up its claim, Maryland ratified the document and the Articles of Confederation became the first constitution of the United States.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Carole Stanford Bucy “Charlotte Reeves Robertson.” Tennessee Encyclopedia. October 8, 2017. <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/charlotte-reeves-robertson/> accessed 13 June 2018

⁷⁸ Anne-Leslie Owens, “John Donelson.” Tennessee Encyclopedia. October 8, 2017. <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/john-donelson/> accessed 13 June 2018

⁷⁹ Terry Weeks, “James Robertson.” Tennessee Encyclopedia. October 8, 2017. <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/james-robertson/> accessed 13 June 2018

⁸⁰ Eric Foner and John A. Garraty editors, *The Reader’s Companion to American History*. (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1991) *History.com*, <https://www.history.com/topics/articles-of-confederation> accessed 14 June 2018.

Nonetheless the weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation and the issue of western territories would continue to plague the new nation and led to the creation and failure of the State of Franklin.

Due to the Confederation government's inability to collect taxes from states, one of the most effective ways for states to pay their debts was to cede, or give up, their western land holdings to the national government. However, in 1783, North Carolina opened up its western lands for private sale. Settlers and wealthy land speculators flooded the region known today as East Tennessee. When the land was finally ceded to the national government, the settlers and speculators kept their private property rights in the region.⁸¹ Meanwhile, the settlers in the region faced numerous hardships without aid from either North Carolina's government or the national government. They built their own schools and courthouses, and defended themselves from American Indian attacks with no support. By August of 1784, many of the settlers did not feel that they owed allegiance to North Carolina, refused to pay taxes, and began speaking of forming their own independent state. The state was ultimately named Franklin in honor of Benjamin Franklin, whose support the settlers wanted to secure. In May 1785, the Confederation Congress heard William Cocke's petition asking for Franklin's admission to the Union as an independent state. A vote was held but Franklin supporters failed to reach the 2/3 majority required under the Articles of Confederation, so legally Franklin remained part of North Carolina. Nevertheless, Franklin continued to act independently.

The unrecognized state signed the Treaty of Dumplin Creek with the Cherokee in June 1785, establishing new territorial boundaries and opening up more land for Franklin's citizens to settle.⁸² However, due to Franklin's lack of legal status, the treaty was unrecognized by the national government. The national government negotiated its own treaty with the Cherokee in November 1785, which established different boundaries. This created many problems for settlers who had moved onto lands they believed they could legally claim only to be told that they were illegally living on lands

⁸¹ Michael Toomey, "State of Franklin" Tennessee Encyclopedia, March 7, 2018.
<https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/state-of-franklin/> accessed 14 June 2018

⁸² Bergeron, Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 41.

belonging to the Cherokee. The conflicting treaties led to intense fighting between the Cherokee and the settlers. Disagreements between the Franklin settlers themselves were an important reason for the state's failure. John Tipton, a well-known landowner in the region became the leader of the anti Franklin settlers in Washington County. Tipton was insulted that the popular John Sevier was chosen as Franklin's governor instead of him. In August 1786, Tipton began convincing people that they needed to give up on independence and return their loyalty to North Carolina.⁸³ In February 1788, Tipton and his small number of followers seized several of John Sevier's enslaved people as payment for North Carolina taxes while Sevier was away. When Sevier returned, he went to Tipton's farm to recover the enslaved people and a battle broke out between John Sevier's forces and Tipton's followers.⁸⁴ The battle was broken up by the arrival of a North Carolina militia brigade, but the fighting among the settlers continued.

Though the Franklinites managed to beat back the Cherokee, the state all but collapsed as laws went un-enforced, taxes went uncollected, and courthouses failed to meet during its final 15 months of existence. The State of Franklin officially ceased to exist in June 1789 when the new United States Constitution replaced the Articles of Confederation and North Carolina officially ceded its western land, including the Franklin territory, to the new federal government. The newly ceded land was quickly established as the federal Territory South of the River Ohio commonly known as the Southwest Territory.

Tennessee Statehood

The establishment of the Southwest Territory in 1789 was the first step towards statehood for Tennessee and created opportunities for many land speculators including John Sevier and William Blount. Blount came from an influential North Carolina family and served as one of North Carolina's

⁸³ Toomey, "State of Franklin"

⁸⁴ Bergeron, Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 44-45.

delegates to the Constitutional Convention. Blount did not actively participate in the convention, but he did attend the sessions and signed the new U.S. Constitution.⁸⁵ It was during this time that Blount came to the attention of George Washington. When North Carolina ceded its western lands to the federal government in 1789, Washington appointed Blount governor of the new territory.

The Southwest Territory comprised all of present day Tennessee and stretched from the crest of the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River. From Blount's perspective it was an ideal assignment. By this time he had acquired a million acres of western land, and it is likely that through partnerships he controlled much more. Blount arrived in the territory in October 1790. He lived first in upper east Tennessee at Rocky Mount.⁸⁶ One aspect of Blount's job as governor was to resolve disputes with the Cherokee. In June 1791, Blount called the Cherokee to a treaty at White's Fort on the Holston River, in present-day Knoxville. The Treaty of the Holston was signed on July 2, 1791.

The treaty began with a call for peace between the United States and the Cherokee and an exchange of prisoners. It also required the Cherokee to cede or give up additional land and set a new boundary.⁸⁷ However, the Cherokee were unhappy because they believed Blount had treated them unfairly.⁸⁸

Blount later built a home near the site of the treaty signing known as Blount Mansion. Despite the successes of the treaty, militant Cherokees and Creeks continued to attack settlers who wanted protection from the army. Blount's superiors refused and Blount was left looking for a solution. Blount decided that the best solution was for Tennessee to become a state.

Thousands of settlers had entered Tennessee through the Cumberland Gap. Because rivers were important as transportation routes, settlements had begun to spring up along the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. When a 1795 census revealed a population in excess of 60,000, large enough to satisfy the statehood requirements of the Northwest Ordinance, Blount sent a delegate to Congress

⁸⁵ Stanley Folmsbee, "William Blount." North Carolina Encyclopedia. 1979.
<https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/blount-william> accessed 14 June 2018.

⁸⁶ Terry Weeks, "William Blount." Tennessee Encyclopedia. 8 October 2017.
<https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/william-blount/> accessed 13 June 2018.

⁸⁷ Treaty with the Cherokee, 1791. The Avalon Project. Yale.
https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/chr1791.asp accessed 10 June 2021

⁸⁸ Weeks, "William Blount."

with instructions to ask for immediate admission.⁸⁹ The delegate soon discovered that the Federalist-controlled Congress was certain that angry westerners would vote against the Federalist candidate in the upcoming presidential election. Therefore, Congress did not take any steps to admit Tennessee as a state. To get around this obstacle, Blount decided to proceed without the blessing of Congress. Blount called for a constitutional convention and when the new document was approved, Blount simply declared that the new Tennessee state constitution was operational.⁹⁰ On June 1, 1796, Tennessee was admitted to the United States. John Sevier, former governor of the State of Franklin, was elected as Tennessee's first governor. Knoxville served as Tennessee's first state capital.

William Blount held office as one of the first Senators from Tennessee. He hoped to use the position to manipulate land prices in the west in his favor. He was convinced that land values would rise if the British controlled the port of New Orleans, and so he arranged for Creek and Cherokee Indians to assist the British in capturing the city from the Spanish. Blount's plot was discovered, and in August 1797, he was promptly expelled from the Senate. Blount returned to Tennessee, where he remained popular.⁹¹ He was elected to the state senate and served in this capacity until September 1799. In March of the following year, William Blount complained of a chill and died after a six-day illness. He is buried at the First Presbyterian Church in Knoxville.

John Sevier was the descendant of French Huguenots who left France for England and changed their name from Xavier to Sevier.⁹² Sevier helped create the Watauga Compact and served as a commissioner of the Watauga Association.⁹³ Sevier, who was known as Nolichucky Jack, was a fierce fighter and took part in many battles against the Cherokee. Sevier's reputation as a military leader was greatly increased by his leading role in the Overmountain Men's victory at King's Mountain in 1780.⁹⁴ Sevier served as governor of the failed State of Franklin as well as representing North

⁸⁹ Bergeron, Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 62-63.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁹¹ Folmsbee, "William Blount."

⁹² Robert E. Corlew, "John Sevier." Tennessee Encyclopedia. October 8, 2017. <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/john-sevier/> accessed 14 June 2018.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Carolina in Congress.⁹⁵ Sevier served six terms as governor of Tennessee and was later elected to represent Tennessee in Congress. In 1815, while on a survey mission, Sevier died and was buried on the Tallapoosa River in modern day Alabama. Sevier's body was later exhumed and reburied in Knoxville in 1887.⁹⁶

Andrew Jackson and the War of 1812

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 had profound consequences for the young United States. Many Americans cheered the Revolutionaries who were motivated by many of the same ideals of liberty that had inspired the American Revolution.⁹⁷ However, the French Revolution quickly became much more radical than the American Revolution. French Revolutionaries seized the property of the middle and upper classes and executed hundreds of people, including King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. France's declaration of war against Britain in 1793 put President Washington in a difficult position. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson thought that the United States should support France because France had aided the Patriots during the American Revolution and because a French victory would weaken Britain's hold on North America. Conversely, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton advocated support for Britain, the United State's most important trading partner.⁹⁸ Washington chose a policy of neutrality, but the British eventually began seizing American ships that traded with France and impressing or forcing American sailors to serve in the British navy.⁹⁹

The conflict between Britain and France had important consequences for the United States including Napoleon's decision to sell Louisiana to the United States in 1803. Presidents Washington, Adams and Jefferson all dealt with foreign policy issues stemming from the war between Britain and

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Joyce Appleby et al., *The American Journey*. (Columbus, Ohio: Glencoe McGraw Hill, 2003), 264-65.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ "Answering the Call: Tennesseans in the War of 1812." Tennessee State Library and Archives. 2014. <https://sharetn.gov.tnsosfiles.com/tsla/exhibits/1812/index.htm>. Accessed 5 July, 2018.

France, but were able to avoid war with either country. By the time that James Madison took office in 1809, tensions between the United States and Britain had skyrocketed due to the continued British practice of searching and seizing American ships and arming American Indians, led by Tecumseh, along the frontier. On June 1, Madison, urged on by War Hawks Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun, asked Congress to declare war on Britain.¹⁰⁰ While the United States dealt with British forces along the Great Lakes, Tennessee's militiamen, led by Andrew Jackson, fought with members of the Creek nation who were part of Tecumseh's alliance.

Following Tennessee's admission to the Union in 1796, settlement in middle and western Tennessee increased. The increase in white settlers led to tensions with the Creeks who lived in a loose confederation of towns along the rivers of Georgia and Alabama. In 1811, the Shawnee leader, Tecumseh visited the southeastern tribes as part of his plan to build an alliance of tribes to stop the spread of white settlements.¹⁰¹ While the southern Creeks were uninterested in Tecumseh's plan, many people in the northern towns supported it. A few warriors joined Tecumseh and the British in fighting the Americans at the beginning of the War of 1812. The War of 1812 triggered a civil war in the Creek towns. The Creeks friendly to the United States were known as the White Stick Creeks and those hostile to the United States were known as the Red Sticks.¹⁰² When members of the Mississippi militia attacked the Red Stick Creeks in 1813, they retaliated by killing 250 settlers at Fort Mims, located just north of Mobile, Alabama. The Fort Mims Massacre as it was called caused the civil war to expand into a larger conflict between the Creeks and forces from Tennessee, Georgia and Mississippi.¹⁰³ Andrew Jackson was selected to lead Tennessee's volunteer militia. He was first ordered to New Orleans, but was stopped in Natchez. On the march back to Nashville, Jackson

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ove Jensen, "Battle of Horseshoe Bend." Encyclopedia of Alabama. 2017. <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1044> accessed 5 July 2018.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

earned the nickname “Old Hickory” by marching alongside his men.¹⁰⁴ Following the Fort Mims Massacre, Jackson took his army south into Creek territory.

By December of 1813, most of Jackson’s volunteer force was ready to return home. They believed that their one year enlistment was about to expire, but Jackson believed the men were obligated to stay. The conflict eventually led to a number of men being court-martialed, but the volunteers returned home.¹⁰⁵ Jackson’s expedition was saved by the arrival of 900 new recruits in January of 1814. By March, the Red Sticks had taken refuge in the Horseshoe Bend of the Tallapoosa River. On March 27, Jackson launched a two pronged assault.¹⁰⁶ A force of Creek and Cherokee warriors crossed the river downstream to attack the Red Stick village from the rear. At the same time Jackson’s force attacked the barricade using artillery fire and then a frontal assault. Young Sam Houston took part in the charge and was seriously wounded. Red Sticks who tried to escape across the river were gunned down by the militia on the opposite shore. Approximately, 800 Red Stick Creeks were killed and 350 women and children made prisoners of the White Sticks and Cherokee allies. Jackson’s force had 49 men killed and 154 wounded.¹⁰⁷ The Creek War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Fort Jackson on August 9, 1814. Jackson forced the Creeks to cede 23 million acres of land to the United States government. The White Sticks who had fought as allies of Jackson were furious that they too had their lands taken from them.¹⁰⁸ Junaluska, the Cherokee chief who saved Jackson’s life during the battle later said that if he had known Jackson would one day drive the Cherokee from their homes, he would have killed Jackson at Horseshoe Bend.¹⁰⁹

Following his victory over the Creeks, Andrew Jackson traveled south to New Orleans and began to strengthen the city’s defenses against the British in December, 1814.¹¹⁰ Jackson pieced

¹⁰⁴ “Answering the Call: Tennesseans in the War of 1812.”

¹⁰⁵ Robert Morgan, *Lions of the West: Heroes and Villains of the Westward Expansion*. (Chapel Hill, NC: Shannon Ravenel, 2011), 78.

¹⁰⁶ Jensen, “Battle of Horseshoe Bend.”

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ “Answering the Call: Tennesseans in the War of 1812.”

¹⁰⁹ Morgan, *Lions of the West*, 85.

¹¹⁰ “Answering the Call: Tennesseans in the War of 1812.”

together a defensive force that included enslaved men, free Blacks, Choctaws, and Tennessee, Kentucky and Louisiana militia units. Jackson promised the enslaved men their freedom in return for their service. When British General Pakenham attacked the strongly fortified American position on January 8, 1815, his forces were devastated by deadly accurate fire from the American riflemen. The British suffered over 3,000 casualties including Pakenham who was killed.¹¹¹ Conversely, Jackson's forces only lost thirteen men. Jackson's stunning victory in the Battle of New Orleans, despite occurring after the Treaty of Ghent was signed in December of 1814, filled most Americans with a sense of national pride.¹¹² However, the enslaved men who fought at the Battle of New Orleans felt differently. Following the battle, Jackson went back on his promise and ordered the men to return to their enslavers. James Roberts was so angered by Jackson that he readied his gun and would have killed Jackson except Jackson had taken the precaution of taking the ammunition from the enslaved men's guns. Roberts and the other enslaved men were returned to their enslavers, while Jackson was hailed as a national hero.¹¹³

Jackson reinforced this view when he seized two Spanish forts in Florida in 1818. His actions led Spain to sign the Adams-Onis Treaty in 1819 which ceded Florida to the United States. Jackson, along with Isaac Shelby, also acquired the land between the Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers from the Choctaw in 1818.¹¹⁴ The land deal was known as the Jackson Purchase. Jackson, John Overton and James Winchester established the town of Memphis and began to encourage settlement in 1819.¹¹⁵ Andrew Jackson's actions in Florida and land deal in west Tennessee reinforced the popular image of him as a hero of the common man.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Skyler Gordan, "Enslaved soldiers and the Battle of New Orleans." Tennessee Historical Society. <https://tennesseehistory.org/battle-of-new-orleans/> accessed 10 June 2021.

¹¹⁴ Blythe Semmer, "Jackson Purchase." Tennessee Encyclopedia. October 8, 2017. <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/jackson-purchase/> accessed 5 July 2018.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

New Madrid Earthquake

On December 16, 1811 residents of New Madrid, Missouri were jolted awake when an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.5 or greater ripped through their town. The force of the earthquake was so strong that it caused church bells to ring in Charleston, South Carolina and chimneys to fall in Cincinnati, Ohio. The region was struck with two more major quakes on January 23 and February 7.¹¹⁶

The quakes caused huge fissures, or cracks in the earth's surface. Coal and sand were ejected into the air. The heaving earth even caused the Mississippi river to reverse its course for a time. The quakes caused the formation of Reelfoot Lake. The lake formed when water rushed in to fill a fissure formed by the earthquake. Residents also reported other natural phenomena including earthquake lights which are caused by pressure on underground quartz crystals.¹¹⁷

Residents of the region were terrified by the earthquakes and aftershocks. The United States was on the verge of war with Britain and many viewed the earthquakes as a sign of troubles to come. According to witness Mary Morriss "some thought the end of the world was come and time would be no more." Eliza Bryan wrote that "the screams of the affrighted inhabitants running to and fro, not knowing where to go or what to do - the cries of the fowls and beasts of every species - the cracking of trees falling, and the roaring of the Mississippi -formed a scene truly horrible."¹¹⁸ While the reported death toll was less than 100, the true death toll was likely much higher. Isolation and poor

¹¹⁶ Elizabeth Rusch, "The Great Midwest Earthquake of 1811." Smithsonian Magazine. December 2011. Smithsonian.com.

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-great-midwest-earthquake-of-1811-46342/?page=1> accessed 28 June 2014.

¹¹⁷ Lucinda Kinsall, "New Madrid Earthquake." Disasters in Tennessee. Tennessee State Library and Archives. <https://sharetn.gov.tnsosfiles.com/tsla/exhibits/disasters/newmadrid.htm> accessed 16 June 2021.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

communication made reporting less than accurate. Many residents moved away from the area making once thriving communities ghost towns in a matter of months.¹¹⁹

For years scientists believed that the quakes were a one-time event. However, recent scientific research has shown that the region has experienced significant quakes in the past and could experience more in the future. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that the risk of a 6.0 magnitude earthquake striking the region in the next 50 years is 25 to 40 percent. Unlike the 1811-1812 earthquakes, a Midwest earthquake today would affect millions of people.¹²⁰

Age of Jackson

By 1824, Andrew Jackson had served as Tennessee's first member of Congress, a Senator, a judge on Tennessee's Superior Court and as major general of the Tennessee militia.¹²¹ Jackson was nominated for the presidency in 1824, but faced a field crowded with political leaders including Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun and John Quincy Adams. Jackson won more popular and electoral votes than his competitors, but not enough to win the presidency.¹²² According to the 12th amendment, in the event that no candidate receives a majority of electoral votes, the House of Representatives selects the president from the three candidates with the highest number of electoral votes. Henry Clay, now out of the running, went to John Quincy Adams with a proposal. Clay would use his influence in the House of Representatives to help Adams win the presidency, if Adams made Clay Secretary of State in return. Adams agreed and became the nation's sixth president in 1825. Jackson's supporters labelled the arrangement the "corrupt bargain" and used it as ammunition against many of the policies Adams hoped to enact.

¹¹⁹ Nancy Henricks. "New Madrid Earthquakes of 1811-1812." Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture. February, 2016. Encyclopediaofarkansas.net
<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2218> accessed 16 June 2016.

¹²⁰ Rusch, "The Great Midwest Earthquake of 1811,"

¹²¹ Harold D. Moser, "Andrew Jackson." Tennessee Encyclopedia. October 8, 2017.
<https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/andrew-jackson/> accessed 5 July, 2018.

¹²² Ibid.

The election of 1828 was a rematch between Adams, whose popularity was waning, and Jackson. The election featured a great deal of mudslinging from both sides. Jackson and his supporters reminded voters of the “corrupt bargain” and accused Adams of betraying the citizens. Adams and the National Republicans retaliated by bringing up Jackson’s duels, his questionable nature of his wife Rachel’s divorce from her first husband and his decision to execute six men for desertion during the War of 1812.¹²³

Starting around 1800 many states began stripping voting rights from Blacks while simultaneously extending suffrage or voting rights to all white men, even those who did not own property. This change greatly increased the number of voters in the southern and western states. Andrew Jackson ultimately won by a landslide thanks to those voters. However, his victory was tempered by loss. His beloved wife Rachel, who had been particularly affected by the mudslinging of the campaign, died in December of 1828 before seeing her husband take office.¹²⁴

Jackson’s two terms as president were marked by a number of controversies including his use of the “spoils system,” his war on the National Bank and the South Carolina Nullification Crisis. For Tennesseans, Jackson’s Indian Removal Act and the subsequent removal of the Cherokee people had the most significant consequences.

Sequoyah

Sequoyah was born in the Cherokee town of Tuskegee along the Tennessee River in what is now Monroe County. Sequoyah was the son of a Virginia trader named Nathaniel Gist and Wureth, the daughter of a prominent Cherokee family.¹²⁵ While he was sometimes known by his English name of George Gist or Guess. Sequoyah was raised in the traditions of the Cherokee. Sequoyah was a

¹²³ Appleby et al., *The American Journey*, 337.

¹²⁴ Moser, “Andrew Jackson.”

¹²⁵ Kevin Smith, “Sequoyah.” Tennessee Encyclopedia. 2018.

<https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/sequoyah/> accessed 6 July 2018.

silversmith, farmer and soldier.¹²⁶ He fought with the Cherokee allied to the United States at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Sequoyah had already become interested in “talking leaves” as American Indians referred to written language before the war. While away from home during the Creek War, he saw that white soldiers could read orders, write home and keep journals. He recognized how beneficial it could be to the Cherokee to have their own written language.¹²⁷ He spent the next ten years perfecting his language even though many of his friends and family ridiculed him. He was even accused of witchcraft by some Cherokee who believed that creating a written language was wrong.¹²⁸ In 1821, Sequoyah and his daughter publicly demonstrated the language for the first time. Within five years, literacy rates among the Cherokee far surpassed their white neighbors.¹²⁹

Sequoyah created a symbol to represent each of the 85 syllables in the Cherokee language. This made the Cherokee language easier to learn than English, where the same letter can represent multiple sounds. Another factor in the language’s success was missionary Samuel Worcester’s work to make the language easily printable.¹³⁰ Worcester believed that translating the Bible into native languages was an excellent way to spread the gospel. He urged his missionary board in Boston to send him a hand printing press in 1827. On February 21, 1828 the first issue of the Cherokee Phoenix was published.¹³¹ The newspaper was published with parallel columns of English and Cherokee. By 1843, more than four million pages had been printed using Sequoyah’s “talking leaves.” Using the syllabary, Cherokee could write letters home, record their history and use the language for government purposes. During the Indian Removal Crisis, Cherokee literacy and conversion to Christianity were cited by their allies as evidence of the successful civilization of the Cherokee nation.

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¹²⁶ Wadley, Ted, "Sequoyah." New Georgia Encyclopedia. 2017
<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/sequoyah-ca-1770-ca-1840> 6 July 2018.

¹²⁷ Smith, “Sequoyah”

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Wadley, "Sequoyah"

¹³¹ Smith, “Sequoyah”

¹³² Ibid.

The Cherokee and The Indian Removal Act

From the earliest days of settlement in Upper East Tennessee, tensions had always existed between the settlers and their Cherokee neighbors over land. Between 1775 and 1819, the Cherokee ceded, or gave up, much of their land through a series of treaties that reduced their holdings to a small corner in Southeast Tennessee and other states. However, the Cherokee faced increasing pressure from both Tennessee and Georgia to abandon their lands entirely. As early as 1817, some Cherokee had voluntarily relocated to Arkansas.¹³³ Most Cherokee wanted to remain on their lands so Cherokee leaders took steps to ensure their people were not forced off their land.

Some Cherokee had already adopted customs from their white neighbors including the practice of slavery. Sequoyah's invention of a written language and the translation of the Bible into Cherokee helped spread Christianity to a significant proportion of the population.¹³⁴ In 1827, Cherokee leaders met at New Echota to write a constitution for the Cherokee nation based on the United States Constitution.¹³⁵ John Ross was chosen to lead the nation as Principal Chief. Ross, the son of a Scottish trader and Cherokee mother, had received a European American education, but also grew up as a full member of the Cherokee nation.¹³⁶ Ross' ability to speak English and Cherokee, as well as his understanding of the customs of both cultures, made him well-suited to lead the Cherokee. Ross and other leaders believed creating a government based on the United States Constitution would protect the Cherokee from removal. Events beyond his control soon proved the belief to be false.

¹³³ "A Brief History of the Trail of Tears." Cherokee Nation. 2018. <http://www.cherokee.org/About-The-Nation/History/Trail-of-Tears/A-Brief-History-of-the-Trail-of-Tears> accessed 5 July 2018.

¹³⁴ Tim Garrison, "'Cherokee Removal.'" New Georgia Encyclopedia. 2017. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/cherokee-removal> accessed 5 July 2018.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Patrice Hobbs Glass, "John Ross." Tennessee Encyclopedia. 2018. <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/john-ross/>. Accessed 6 July 2018.

Two significant events occurred in 1828. The first was the discovery of gold on Cherokee lands in north Georgia. Georgia residents had already been pushing for Cherokee removal, but the discovery of gold made removal even more urgent in the eyes of state officials.¹³⁷ The second event was the election of President Andrew Jackson. Jackson had fought with the Cherokee and White Stick Creeks against the Red Stick Creeks in the Creek War of 1813-1814. However, in the Treaty of Fort Jackson, he forced the White Stick Creeks, his allies, as well as the Red Stick Creeks to cede land. The Creek nation was forced to cede 23 million acres of land in Alabama and Georgia.¹³⁸ Jackson had also played a key role in the Jackson Purchase of 1818 in which the Chickasaw gave up their land claims in west Tennessee.¹³⁹ In 1819, Yonaguska, head chief of the Oconaluftee Cherokee signed a treaty with the United States government in which he and 50 other heads of households agreed to withdraw from the Cherokee nation and become citizens of the state of North Carolina in return for 640 acres of land each.¹⁴⁰

In 1830, Jackson introduced his Indian Removal Act to Congress. Jackson argued the removal helped American Indians by removing them from the corrupting influences of white society and allowing them to maintain their distinctive way of life.¹⁴¹ A few Cherokee, such as Elias Boudinot, agreed with his thinking. The act was challenged in Congress by Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, members of the Whig party. David Crockett, a fellow Tennessean, also spoke against the act.¹⁴² As principal chief, John Ross' strategy was to challenge removal through the courts. Though the Cherokee lost the 1831 case *Cherokee v. State of Georgia*, they won in the Supreme Court case *Worcester v. Georgia*. In this case, missionary Samuel Worcester had challenged Georgia's claim to Cherokee lands. The court ruled in favor of the Cherokee.¹⁴³ In the majority opinion, John Marshall

¹³⁷ Garrison, "Cherokee Removal"

¹³⁸ Morgan, *Lions of the West*, 88.

¹³⁹ Semmer, "Jackson Purchase"

¹⁴⁰ Theda Perdue, "Yonaguska (Drowning Bear) NCpedia. <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/yonaguska> Accessed 21 June 2021.

¹⁴¹ Morgan, *Lions of the West*, 166.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 139.

¹⁴³ Garrison, "Cherokee Removal"

acknowledged the right of the Cherokee nation “as a sovereign nation to govern themselves and all persons who have settled within their territory, free from any right of legislative interference by the several states composing the United States of America.”¹⁴⁴ However, President Jackson refused to enforce the decision. He is said to have remarked, “John Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it.”

While John Ross continued to fight removal, other Cherokee leaders came to see taking the money offered by the United States and moving west voluntarily as the best option for the Cherokee. In 1835, Major Ridge and other Cherokee leaders signed the Treaty of New Echota without Ross’ knowledge or consent.¹⁴⁵ In the treaty, Ridge and the others ceded all Cherokee lands east of the Mississippi River. In return the Cherokee received a grant of land in Indian Territory and five million dollars. Ross protested that Ridge and the others did not have the authority to sign the treaty and Ross’ allies in Congress tried to block it, but the treaty passed in the Senate by one vote. Ross continued to resist removal until 1838, when General Scott, under orders from Martin Van Buren, arrived to begin rounding up the Cherokee.¹⁴⁶

Upon hearing of the signing of the Treaty of New Echota, Yonaguska sent his adopted white son, William Holland Thomas, to Washington to protect the interests of the Oconaluftee Cherokee. In 1837, the commissioners tasked with carrying out the Treaty of New Echota, upheld the 1819 treaty and allowed the Oconaluftee Cherokee to remain in North Carolina. After the death of Yonaguska, Thomas continued to represent the Oconaluftee Cherokee to the United States government. In 1848, the government recognized the Eastern Band of the Cherokee. Acting on behalf of the Cherokee who could not legally buy land, Thomas also purchased 50,000 acres of land that is part of the Qualla Boundary, home to the Eastern Band of the Cherokee.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ "Worcester v. Georgia." Oyez. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1789-1850/31us515> accessed 10 June 2021.

¹⁴⁵ Garrison, "Cherokee Removal."

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Gordon McKinney, "William Holland Thomas." NCpedia. <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/thomas-william-holland> accessed 3 June 2021.

After the deadline for voluntary removal passed in May 1838, the remaining Cherokee were forcibly gathered from their home with little time to collect supplies or personal belongings. The land and possessions they were forced to leave behind were immediately seized by white settlers.¹⁴⁸ The Cherokee were marched to depots like Fort Cass in present-day Charleston, Tennessee. The depots were essentially a staging area with internment camps where the Cherokee waited to be organized into groups, called detachments, to make the journey west. The army had planned to move the Cherokee along the Hiwassee, Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi and Arkansas rivers primarily using steamboats, flat boats, and keelboats. However, drought conditions quickly dried up the rivers making water transport difficult for the first three detachments. Disease and desertion also reduced the numbers in the first three detachments. Few guards were sent to ensure that the Cherokee did not simply leave the detachments as they travelled. The records do not indicate exactly how many Cherokee deserted or what happened to them afterwards. The most famous deserter was Junaluska, who had fought alongside Jackson at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Junaluska was captured near Knoxville and later sent to Indian Territory under military guard. Junaluska eventually made his way back to North Carolina and was granted land and citizenship by the North Carolina legislature in 1847 in recognition of his service in the Creek War.¹⁴⁹

Because of the drought conditions and the danger of diseases such as cholera, Cherokee leaders asked for and were granted permission to delay the journey until the fall when the weather was more favorable for travel. The army had not prepared for people to stay in the camps for long periods of time and conditions quickly deteriorated. Diseases including dysentery, measles and whooping cough spread quickly into crowded camps and many Cherokee died. Based on the journal of Reverend Daniel Butrick, a missionary living among the Cherokee, scholars estimate that between 750 and 1,500 Cherokee died in the camps.¹⁵⁰ Among the many Cherokee who died in the camps was

¹⁴⁸ Garrison, "Cherokee Removal"

¹⁴⁹ Viki Rozema, *Voices from the Trail of Tears*. Winston-Salem, NC. John F. Blair, 2003.

¹⁵⁰ Will Chavel, "Insight provided on Cherokee removal camps in Tennessee." Cherokee Phoenix, https://www.cherokeephoenix.org/culture/insight-provided-on-cherokee-removal-camps-in-tennessee/article_45b76296-be31-11eb-bde8-1fcea3e244cd.html accessed 26 May 2021.

a 90 year old Black woman whose children Nanny and Peter had recently purchased their mother's freedom.¹⁵¹ Presumably, Nanny and a large number of other enslaved people survived the camps and accompanied their enslavers on the journey west.

When the Cherokee finally began the long journey west, they faced freezing temperatures and very little food. Reverend Daniel S. Butrick described the ground over which they traveled as "mostly covered with snow & frozen rain."¹⁵² Along with the Cherokee, enslaved people on the journey cut firewood, cared for the sick and removed obstacles on the trail while enduring the same miserable conditions as their enslavers. Butrick's journal also records the deaths of many Cherokee including a young woman who was found dead with her infant in her arms just a few days after giving birth. She was one of an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 Cherokee who died as a result of removal. The Cherokee referred to the routes west as the "trail where they cried," commonly known as the Trail of Tears.

Upon reaching Indian Territory, present day Oklahoma, Ross encouraged his people to establish farms, businesses and schools.¹⁵³ It was a turbulent time for the Cherokee Nation due to the split over removal, but Ross retained his power. When the Civil War began in 1861, Ross first supported the Confederacy, but then shifted his support to the Union.¹⁵⁴ As with the issue of removal, the Cherokee were divided during the Civil War. Ross was reelected by pro-union Cherokees and continued to be recognized by the United States as leader of the Cherokee. John Ross remained Principal Chief of the Cherokee until his death in 1866.¹⁵⁵

Today, the Cherokee Nation is the largest tribe in the United States. More than 141,000 Cherokee Nation citizens live within the reservation boundaries in northeastern Oklahoma. The tribe's businesses generated more than 2.16 billion dollars for Oklahoma's economy in 2018. The mission statement of the Cherokee states that "The Cherokee Nation is committed to protecting our inherent

¹⁵¹ Reverend Daniel Butrick. "The Journal of Reverend Daniel Butrick: Cherokee Removal." Trail of Tears Association, Oklahoma Chapter.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Taylor-Colbert, Alice, "John Ross." New Georgia Encyclopedia. 2017.

<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/john-ross-1790-1866> 6 July 2018.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

sovereignty, preserving and promoting Cherokee culture, language and values, and improving the quality of life for the next seven generations of Cherokee Nation citizens.”¹⁵⁶

Tennessee Politics in the Nineteenth Century

In the frontier period, Tennessee politics were dominated by factions controlled by John Sevier and William Blount. As Sevier grew older, his faction became less powerful and eventually disappeared. Blount’s faction was revived under the leadership of John Overton.¹⁵⁷ Eventually, Andrew Erwin would develop his own faction to oppose Overton. The ascendancy of Erwin and Overton was indicative of the shift in political and economic power from East Tennessee to Middle Tennessee that occurred with the rise of plantation agriculture in the state. Erwin’s faction included William Carroll, John Bell and Newton Cannon and would eventually become the Whig Party. Overton’s group included Andrew Jackson, Sam Houston and James K. Polk and would become the Democrats.

Erwin’s faction successfully ran William Carroll for governor in 1821. Carroll was a popular choice having served with Jackson in the Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans. Jackson would have supported Carroll if his opponent had not been a neighbor and friend of Jackson. Carroll won anyway and served as Tennessee’s governor from 1821-1835 except for the years 1827-1829.¹⁵⁸ Carroll made many improvements in Tennessee’s criminal justice system, including revising the criminal code, building a new penitentiary that focused on reforming prisoners instead of just punishing them, and building an insane asylum for the mental ill. Though conditions in the asylum

¹⁵⁶ Cherokee Nation, Homepage. <https://www.cherokee.org/>. Accessed 11 June 2021.

¹⁵⁷ Paul Bergeron, Stephen Ash and Jeanette Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 91-94

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

were abysmal by today's standards, it did represent an improvement from the prior system in which the mentally ill were imprisoned with criminals.¹⁵⁹

The Overton faction responded to their defeat in the 1823 governor's race by looking to advance Andrew Jackson's career. Their first step was to have Jackson selected by the legislature to serve as one of Tennessee's Senators. Jackson did little during his time in the Senate, viewing it as a way of gaining exposure for his presidential campaign in 1824. Though Jackson won the popular vote in 1824, did not become president because he failed to win enough electoral votes. Jackson's election as president in 1828 led to the ascendancy of the Democratic Party in national politics, but not in his home state of Tennessee. One of Jackson's actions as president was the destruction of the National Bank. This angered many prominent Tennessee businessmen who in turn set out to elect anti-Jackson candidates to state and national office. Eventually these men became Tennessee's Whig Party, though they did not always agree with or follow the party's national platform.¹⁶⁰

When Jackson's second term was over, he endorsed his vice-president Martin Van Buren as the Democratic candidate in 1832. Tennessee's Whigs put forth Hugh Lawson White as an opponent. Governor Carroll supported Van Buren though he lacked Jackson's popularity. Though the Whig strategy of running three regional candidates assured Van Buren's victory, White and his anti-Jackson party won in Tennessee. In 1834, Whig John Bell defeated James K. Polk in the race to be Speaker of the House of Representatives, though Polk would gain the position in 1835. The 1835 Tennessee's governor race also represented a challenge to Jackson.¹⁶¹ The Whigs ran Newton Cannon against long-time Governor William Carroll. Carroll's support of Van Buren hurt his chances and he was defeated by Cannon Cannon served as governor until he was defeated by James K. Polk in 1839.¹⁶² Tennessee Democrats cheered Polk's victory, but it would be short lived. James C. Jones was selected by the Whigs to oppose Polk in 1841. Building on the popularity of William Henry Harrison's

¹⁵⁹ Robert Oliver, "Tennessee Lunatic Asylum," Tennessee Encyclopedia. 2018. <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/tennessee-lunatic-asylum/> 2 July 2021.

¹⁶⁰ Bergeron, Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 94-95.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

image as a common man born in a log cabin, Jones campaigned by telling stories and generally entertaining voters.¹⁶³ Polk, an intellectual not known for his winning personality, was frustrated by Jones' appeal to voters. Jones defeated Polk in 1841 and Polk lost the governor's race again in 1843, before becoming the Democrat's dark horse presidential candidate in 1844.

Polk campaigned on a platform of Manifest Destiny and promised to annex both Oregon and Texas. John Tyler beat Polk to the punch and annexed Texas before his term ended. Tennessee Senator Ephraim Foster voted against Texas annexation which cost him the governor's race in 1845.¹⁶⁴ However Democrat Aaron Brown was defeated by Whig Neill S. Brown in 1847. Tennessee's Whigs would hold on to power until 1849 when Democrat William Trousdale was elected governor. In Tennessee, as in the nation, Democrats dominated politics in the 1850s. This would not change into the ascendancy of the Republican party beginning with Andrew Johnson's appointment as military governor in 1862 by Abraham Lincoln.¹⁶⁵ The contentious nature of Tennessee politics in the early 19th century was mirrored in the constitutional convention of 1834.

Tennessee Constitution of 1834

When William Blount oversaw the creation of Tennessee's constitution in 1796, Tennessee was a frontier area. By 1834, Tennessee's population had grown to almost 700,000 and cities had developed throughout the state.¹⁶⁶ The 1796 Constitution could no longer effectively govern the state. Therefore, the Tennessee General Assembly called for a constitutional convention to meet in Nashville in 1834.¹⁶⁷ The new constitution resolved a number of problems including establishing a three branch system of government that allowed Tennessee to create a system of courts for the first

¹⁶³ Ibid., 101-103.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 104-105.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ "The Tennessee Constitution of 1834." Tennessee State Library and Archives. <https://tsla.tnsosfiles.com/digital/teva/intros/33662.pdf> 6 July 2018.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

time. The new constitution also changed the tax structure so that land was taxed according to its value and for the first time counties also had the power to tax.¹⁶⁸ Perhaps the most important changes had to do with suffrage. The requirement to own property was dropped which made many men eligible to vote for the first time. However, free Black men lost their right to vote when the word “white” was added to the franchise clause. The delegates also held a heated debate on the emancipation of enslaved persons. Ultimately, the convention decided that the General Assembly “would have no power to pass laws for the emancipation of slaves.”¹⁶⁹ Thus, the 1834 Tennessee Constitution expanded voting rights for white men while simultaneously stripping free Black men of their right to vote and setting up legal barriers to emancipation in Tennessee.

Slavery and Cotton in Tennessee

While each enslaved person’s life experience was unique, legally enslaved people were all considered to be the property of their enslavers. As property, enslaved people could be bought, sold, used as collateral on a loan or bequeathed in a will. The law did not recognize the marriages of enslaved people and did little to prevent children from being sold away from their parents. The law also determined that a child’s status as an enslaved person or free person followed that of his or her mother. In other words, the child of an enslaved woman was always an enslaved person even if his or her father was free. Tennessee enslaved people were not supposed to own weapons, sell anything or leave their enslaver’s land without explicit permission. Tennessee law also made it illegal for enslaved people to earn money to buy their freedom and after 1831 required any person freed to leave the state within a year or face severe penalties including being returned to slavery.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ William Lloyd Imes, "The Legal Status of Free Negroes and enslaved persons in Tennessee." *The Journal of Negro History* 4, no. 3 (1919): Pg. 88. JSTOR database.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/2713777?seq=3#page_scan_tab_contents accessed 6 July 2018.

In reality, while some of these laws were consistently enforced, others were mostly ignored or inconsistently enforced. For example, by the 1840s it was common practice for enslaved people living in cities to “buy their time.” In this arrangement, the enslaved person was able to hire himself or herself out for wages. A portion of the wages went to the enslaver and the rest belonged to the enslaved person.¹⁷¹ Over time, many enslaved people were able to use the money they earned to buy their freedom and the freedom of their family members. For example, Sally Thomas established a very successful business as a laundress in Nashville in the 1830s. She was eventually able to purchase her own freedom and that of her three sons.¹⁷² Generally speaking, enslaved people who lived in urban areas had more opportunities to live and work independently from their enslavers than enslaved people who lived in rural areas. Additionally, enslaved people who possessed a special skill such as blacksmithing also had a better chance of earning their freedom. Sally Thomas was well known for her ability to launder expensive fabrics which made her business popular with wealthy clients.¹⁷³

Support for slavery was not universal. In 1815, Quaker Charles Osburn founded The Tennessee Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves at the Lost Creek Meeting House in Jefferson County. Elihu Embree, a fellow Quaker, joined the society and in 1820 began publishing The Emancipator, the nation’s first publication devoted to the antislavery cause.¹⁷⁴ Six years later, Francis Wright, a wealthy Englishwoman, began the Nashoba colony in West Tennessee. Nashoba was one of many utopian communities created in this era. Wright intended Nashoba as a social experiment to show that formerly enslaved people and white settlers could live and work together. The colony experienced financial and other difficulties and by 1827 the white residents had left. Wright paid for the remaining Black residents to immigrate to Haiti.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, Virginia Hill purchased 2,000 acres of land in present day Clay County in 1830. She then freed the people she enslaved,

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² “Sally Thomas.” Tennessee4me. Tennessee State Museum. http://www.tn4me.org/sapage.cfm/sa_id/172/era_id/4/major_id/21/minor_id/62/a_id/174 accessed 6 July 2018.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ “Elihu Embree.” Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture. 1st edition. 1998.

¹⁷⁵ “Nashoba.” Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture. 1st edition. 1998.

gave them the land and moved away. The community took the name Free Hill and served as a refuge for enslaved people fleeing slavery prior to the Civil War.¹⁷⁶

As plantation agriculture grew in Middle and West Tennessee, attitudes towards slavery changed. Increasingly, free Blacks were seen as a threat to the system of slavery. It was believed that free people as well as Northerner agitators encouraged disobedience or outright rebellion.¹⁷⁷ In 1835, Amos Dresser, a Bible salesman from Ohio, was publicly whipped and expelled from Nashville after he was found with antislavery literature. This came just one year after the best efforts of Tennessee's antislavery societies failed to have an amendment in favor of gradual emancipation added to the 1834 state constitution.¹⁷⁸ Tennessee's antislavery societies, which were mostly based in East Tennessee, faded away after the defeat. Some leaders, like Benjamin Lundy and John Rankin moved north to continue their work. Others, like the Quaker inhabitants of Friendsville, secretly assisted enslaved people who ran away seeking freedom in the north.

By the 1850s most of Tennessee's Black population were enslaved agricultural workers living in Middle and West Tennessee. In Middle Tennessee, tobacco was the most important crop. In 1860, enslaved workers on the Wessyngton plantation produced 250,000 pounds of dark-fired tobacco.¹⁷⁹ At Wessyngton enslaved people were allowed to grow their own plots of tobacco that they worked on Sundays and in the evenings. They were given one third of the price that their enslaver George Washington received for the tobacco in a system similar to sharecropping.¹⁸⁰ However, this system was the exception, not the rule. Most enslaved people worked long hours in the enslaver's fields with little or no time for themselves. Enslaved people were subject to harsh punishments including whippings and being sold away from friends and family members. Despite these potential punishments, enslaved people found many ways to resist. For example, Robert Cartmell often

¹⁷⁶ "Free Hill ." Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture. 1st edition. 1998.

¹⁷⁷ Bergeron, Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 120-124.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ John F. Baker, *The Washingtons of Wessyngton Plantation*. (New York: Atria Books, 2009) 81.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

complained that on a cold day the people he enslaved spent more time standing around a fire than baling cotton.¹⁸¹

Following Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin in 1794, slavery and cotton production increased throughout the Deep South. West Tennessee became a center of cotton production after the Jackson Purchase of 1819 opened the land to white settlers. The Chickasaw sold all their lands in Tennessee and Kentucky for 300,000 dollars.¹⁸² John Overton, along with partners James Winchester and Andrew Jackson, began to develop a settlement in the area. Winchester's sons laid out the town's streets in a grid pattern based on that of Philadelphia.¹⁸³ Winchester referred to the Mississippi as America's Nile and suggested that the new town be named for one of ancient Egypt's most famous cities, Memphis.¹⁸⁴ Despite its lofty name, many people continued to refer to the settlement as Chickasaw Bluffs. Memphis' growth was slow in the early years due to a number of factors. First, just as development was beginning in the region, a depression struck. Secondly, settlers either had to buy land from those who held the original land claims from North Carolina or simply squat on the land and risk losing it in the future.¹⁸⁵ The popular perception of Memphis as unhealthy also kept the population low. The impression of ill health was seemingly verified by periodic outbreaks of dengue fever, malaria, smallpox and yellow fever.¹⁸⁶ Lastly, a sandbar near the port made docking difficult. Memphis' fortunes began to change in 1832 when the Chickasaw treaties cleared northern Mississippi of American Indians and opened new lands to cotton growers.

Cotton grown on the lands near Memphis was of the highest quality and consistently fetched higher prices than cotton grown in other parts of the state.¹⁸⁷ Tennessee cotton was transported to textile factories in the north using steamboats. The clear connection between the "Lords of the Lash"

¹⁸¹ "Slavery." Tennessee4me. Tennessee State Museum.

http://www.tn4me.org/minor_cat.cfm/minor_id/62/major_id/21/era_id/4 accessed 6 July 2018.

¹⁸² John Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers: Three Regions in Transition*. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press. 2001). 248.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 255.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 258.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 265.

or enslavers and the “Lords of the Loom, or northern factory owners was noted by Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner in an 1848 speech.¹⁸⁸ Other crops grew equally well in the fertile soil of the region including tobacco, corn and wheat. In 1842, authorities in Memphis finally gained the upper hand over the Mississippi riverboat men who had long ignored wharf taxes. With an orderly system for controlling trade in place, the town experienced a boom in trade and population.¹⁸⁹ Memphis became an important center for the cotton trade and a major trading center for enslaved people. By 1857 Memphis had 12 slave trading companies. The largest, Bolton, Dickens & Co. had annual profits of \$96,000.¹⁹⁰ Nathan Bedford Forrest, the future Confederate general, was another person who grew wealthy by trading enslaved people in Memphis.

Nashville also had a large slave trading district which stretched from Fourth Avenue North and Charlotte to the Public Square.¹⁹¹ The area included not only the slave trading firms but also related businesses such as insurance firms which offered policies on “ House servants, farm hands, steamboat firemen, cabin boys etc” promised that policies would be issued and “losses promptly adjusted at the Nashville agency.”¹⁹² Banks also played a key role in the trade by offering favorable loans for the purchase of enslaved people. Nashville served as a transportation hub that connected Virginia and Maryland with the Deep South via the Natchez Trace. Enslaved people were often forced to walk from their homes in the Upper South to the slave markets of Mississippi through Tennessee. This internal or domestic trade in enslaved people is often referred to as the Second Middle Passage.

¹⁸⁸ Charles Sumner, “ Speech for Union Among Men of All Parties Against the Slave Power, and the Extension of Slavery in a Mass Convention at Worcester, June 28, 1848,” in *Orations and Speeches*, <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/AAT1053.0001.001> , 257.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 265.

¹⁹⁰ Hannah, Spurrison, “ Profitability and Slave Treatment in West Tennessee.” *Rhodes Institute for Regional Studies*, 14 August 2008, https://www.amesplantation.org/sites/411/uploaded/files/Profitability_and_Slave_Treatment_in_West_Tennessee.pdf 23.

¹⁹¹ Steven Hale, “Nashville Is Starting to Face Its History of Slavery,” *Nashville Scene*, 4 April 2018, https://www.nashvillescene.com/news/nashville-is-starting-to-face-its-history-of-slavery/article_a53a8389-a689-510e-9154-0c0b0b66b227.html Accessed 07 July 2021.

¹⁹² “The Enslaved in Nashville.” *North Nashville Heritage Project*, Tennessee State University, <https://www.tnstate.edu/nnhp/slavery.aspx> Accessed 07 July 2021 see images of advertisements linked from the article.

¹⁹³ The sale of enslaved people and the sale of the products they labored to produce played a key role in Tennessee's economy in the 19th century.

Tennessee's Economy in the 19th Century

During the frontier era, most Tennesseans lived on scattered farms in East Tennessee. There were no cities and few towns in the modern sense of the word. Most families farmed but only the wealthy men like John Sevier and William Blount were enslavers. The nineteenth century brought many changes to Tennessee, including a redistribution of its population. Middle Tennessee became the most populous region, followed by newly settled West Tennessee.¹⁹⁴ Middle Tennessee boasted the city of Nashville as well as the towns of Clarksville, Columbia and Murfreesboro. Memphis, with its location on the Mississippi River grew by leaps and bounds and brought West Tennessee into contact with New Orleans and the Deep South.¹⁹⁵

Industry played only a small role in Tennessee's economy in the nineteenth century. Iron production, mostly along the Western Highland Rim, was the most important industry followed by textile manufacturing, tobacco processing, coal and copper mining and production of machinery and rail cars.¹⁹⁶ Many of the industries relied on the labor of enslaved people, though poor whites and immigrants also found employment. Immigrants were an especially important source of labor in the coal mines.¹⁹⁷

By contrast, the majority of Tennesseans were involved in some form of agriculture. In West Tennessee, cotton was the main cash crop. As cotton production increased in the region, so did the

¹⁹³ Henry Louis Gates Jr. "What was the Second Middle Passage?" *The African Americans : Many Rivers to Cross*, PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/what-was-the-2nd-middle-passage/> Accessed 07 July 2021.

¹⁹⁴ Bergeron, Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 110.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

number of enslaved people. By 1860, 34 percent of West Tennessee's population was enslaved and in Fayette and Haywood counties enslaved people outnumbered whites.¹⁹⁸ In Middle Tennessee, tobacco was grown in the northern counties and cotton in the southern counties. Some large plantations existed, like Wessyngton in Robertson County, but most farms were smaller and worked by the family and perhaps a few enslaved people. The region's most important export was livestock. Middle Tennessee supplied hogs, mules, horses and sheep used throughout the South. In East Tennessee, most people lived on small farms that produced wheat, corn, and livestock for local markets without the use of enslaved labor.¹⁹⁹

Lack of access to transportation was the main reason that East Tennessee's economy remained local, unlike Middle and West Tennessee which exported products to the Deep South. Beginning in 1819, steamboats regularly carried cargo to and from Nashville.²⁰⁰ Memphis, with its location on the Mississippi River, could easily trade with both New Orleans and Cincinnati. By contrast, few steamboats reached Chattanooga or Knoxville because of the obstacles in the Tennessee River, including Muscle Shoals in northern Alabama.²⁰¹ A number of toll roads were constructed in the early 1800s, but these did little to help East Tennessee. The roads helped solidify Nashville's position as a center of trade but shipping cargo by wagon remained expensive and time consuming. Tennesseans considered building canals, but by the 1830s turned their attention to building railroads.²⁰² East Tennesseans in particular saw railroads as the answer to their transportation problems. The state issued bonds to help fund the railroads, but the Panic of 1837 caused most of the early railroads companies to fail. By the 1850s, the economy had improved and hundreds of miles of track were built in Tennessee.²⁰³ However, because the railroads ran mostly north/south the state's economy remained disjointed. Businessmen in Memphis were much more

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 111-113.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 113-117.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

likely to do business in New Orleans than in Knoxville. While Tennessee's economic growth benefited many, others believed that their prospects would be better west of the Mississippi River. They joined the growing throng of people headed to Oregon, California and Texas.

Manifest Destiny

In the 1820s Texas was a vast unsettled territory that belonged to Spain. To encourage settlement, Spain offered large tracts of land to agents, called empresarios, who promised to bring families to settle on the land.²⁰⁴ American Moses Austin received a land grant in 1821, but before he could claim it, Mexico declared its independence from Spain. Mexico eventually confirmed the grant which passed to Moses' son Stephen Austin after Moses' death.²⁰⁵ Austin selected 300 families to settle the land along the Brazos and Colorado rivers. To encourage settlement, Mexico offered the land at very low prices and promised not to tax the settlers for four years. In return settlers were supposed to learn Spanish, obey Mexican law and convert to Catholicism.²⁰⁶ However, few settlers kept these promises. Mexican authorities hoped to encourage citizens from other parts of Mexico to move to Texas, but the majority of the settlers were Americans who saw the potential for growing cotton in the fertile soil of East Texas. Most of the settlers were Southerners and brought enslaved people with them to work the land.

By 1830, the Mexican government was fearful of the growing American influence in Texas and took measures to stop it. Mexico passed laws to stop the immigration of Americans, and placed a high tariff on goods imported from the United States. These new laws, along with Mexico's decision to abolish slavery, created even more tension in Texas.²⁰⁷ Some American settlers began to call for independence, but Austin and others looked for a peaceful resolution. A number of small scale

²⁰⁴ Appleby et al., *The American Journey*, 363.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 364.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

conflicts between Texans and the Mexican military occurred between 1830 and September, 1835. Due to the rising tensions, a Mexican military commander decided to retrieve a cannon that had been loaned to the town of Gonzales for its defense against American Indian attacks. The citizens refused to return it and a battle resulted. The Texans were able to defeat the Mexican force and consider the Battle of Gonzales as the first battle of the Texas Revolution.²⁰⁸ Following the Battle of Gonzales, Texas called for volunteers to join its army. Two Tennesseans, Sam Houston and David “Davy” Crockett, answered the call.

Sam Houston was already a well-known figure when he moved to Texas in 1833. Houston had served under Andrew Jackson in the Creek War and was wounded at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.²⁰⁹ Jackson, impressed by Houston’s courage, became his mentor and launched his political career. Houston served as Indian agent to the Cherokee, was elected to two terms in Congress, and was elected governor of Tennessee in 1827.²¹⁰ Houston was forced to resign the governorship in 1829 due to a marriage scandal. He then moved to Arkansas to live among his Cherokee friends where he ran a successful trading post. Economic opportunities soon drew Houston to Texas where he was selected to lead the army in 1835.²¹¹

Like Houston, Crockett also served in the Creek War under Jackson and served in Congress. However, Crockett disliked Andrew Jackson and openly opposed him on a number of issues while serving in Congress.²¹² Crockett’s opposition to Jackson’s Indian Removal Act likely caused him to lose his bid for reelection in 1835. Crockett then went to Texas where he hoped to jumpstart his political career. By the time Crockett reached Texas, the revolutionaries had divided themselves into pro and anti-Jackson factions. Not surprisingly, Crockett supported the anti-Jackson faction which opposed Houston’s appointment as commander of the army. When Houston told the men holding the

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 365.

²⁰⁹ Morgan, *Lions of the West*, 156.

²¹⁰ John Hoyt Williams, “Sam Houston.” Tennessee Encyclopedia. 2018.
<https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/sam-houston/> Accessed 9 July, 2018

²¹¹ Morgan, *Lions of the West*, 175-177

²¹² Ibid., 126, 135-137.

Alamo, an old Spanish mission near San Antonio, to abandon it, they refused. Crockett decided to join the anti-Jackson/Houston defenders in the fort in early February.²¹³ On February 23, Santa Anna, commander of the Mexican army, laid siege to the fort. William Travis sent numerous messages asking for reinforcements and supplies, but none came. On March 6, 1836, Santa Anna attacked. The 150 defenders in the Alamo held off two attempts to breach the walls by the much larger Mexican force, but were overwhelmed by the third assault. Santa Anna had ordered that the Alamo's defenders be given no quarter, meaning that all the men were to be killed.²¹⁴ While sources disagree about the exact circumstances of Crockett's death, it is certain his death and the deaths of the other men at the Alamo inspired many Texans to continue the fight.

By the time news of the Alamo reached Houston, he had regained control of the army and Texas had formally declared its independence from Mexico. Fearing another Alamo, Houston ordered the troops at Goliad to abandon that fort and rejoin his command. The fort's commander, James Fannin, ignored Houston's order until it was too late. When his forces finally abandoned the fort, they were captured, returned to the fort and executed.²¹⁵ The people of Texas saw the men of the Alamo and Goliad as martyrs, people who died for their beliefs. In the meantime, Houston was leading his army and a large number of civilians on a strategic retreat. Houston eventually launched a surprise attack on Santa Anna's forces on April 21, 1836 at San Jacinto. The Texan forces shouted "Remember the Alamo!" and "Remember Goliad!" as they attacked. The Texans defeated the army and captured Santa Anna who signed a treaty recognizing Texas' independence on May 14, 1836. Houston was quickly elected as president of the new Lone Star Republic.²¹⁶

One of Houston's first acts as president was to seek annexation by the United States. Southerners favored the addition of a new slave state, but most Northerners opposed annexation because it would have tipped the balance of power in favor of the South. President Van Buren wanted

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 141.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 145-46.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 142.

²¹⁶ Williams, "Sam Houston"

to avoid both conflict over slavery and war with Mexico and therefore declined to annex Texas.²¹⁷

Houston served two terms as President of the Lone Star Republic before Texas became a state in 1845.²¹⁸ He later served as a Senator and governor of Texas, making him the only American to serve as governor of two states and president of an independent nation.

The issue of Texas annexation came to the forefront of American politics during the election of 1844. James K. Polk, the protege of Andrew Jackson known as “Young Hickory,” made the annexation of Texas a central part of his platform. Polk also proposed acquiring California and resolving the Oregon boundary dispute with Great Britain. This platform greatly appealed to Americans caught up in the idea of Manifest Destiny and helped Polk win the election in 1844. Newspaper editor John O’Sullivan first coined the phrase “manifest destiny” in the 1840s to describe the feeling shared by many Americans that the United States was destined to stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.²¹⁹

James K. Polk was born in Pineville N.C., on November 2, 1795. Polk’s father Samuel was a successful farmer and surveyor. Seeking new opportunities, he moved his family to Tennessee in 1806. The family settled in the town of Columbia along the Duck River. Samuel was a successful land speculator and judge.²²⁰ Polk was a serious and sickly child. At the age of 16, he underwent a painful operation for kidney stones. After that his health improved somewhat and he was able to enter the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Polk excelled there and graduated first in his class in 1818.²²¹ Polk returned to Tennessee and began to study law under Felix Grundy. When Grundy was elected to the legislature, Polk took the post of clerk of the state senate. There he learned parliamentary procedure while also finishing his legal education. Polk was admitted to the Tennessee Bar in 1820 and began to practice law.²²²

²¹⁷ Appleby et al., *The American Journey*, 368.

²¹⁸ Morgan, *Lions of the West*, 142.

²¹⁹ Appleby et al., *The American Journey*, 360-361.

²²⁰ Morgan, *Lions of the West*, 196-97.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Wayne Cutler, “Samuel K. Polk.” Tennessee Encyclopedia. 2018.
<https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/james-knox-polk/> Accessed 9 July 2018.

During this time, Polk met both his future wife Sarah Childress and his mentor Andrew Jackson. Sarah Childress, a wealthy and intelligent young woman, would prove to be a great asset to Polk's political career. Quiet and serious, Polk lacked the social skills of his contemporaries, Crockett and Houston. Sarah helped to make up for the deficit.²²³ With the advice and support of Jackson, Polk was elected to Congress in 1825. Polk used his position in Congress to defend Jackson and to help Jackson win the election of 1828. With Jackson's support, Polk was elected Speaker of the House in 1835. In 1839, Polk was elected governor of Tennessee. He was very disappointed when he lost his bid for reelection in 1841. He lost again in 1843 leading most people to believe his political career was over.²²⁴

The issue of Texas annexation was the most important issue in 1844 and Jackson wanted to make sure that Texas joined the United States. Jackson backed Polk as the Democratic candidate for president in 1844. When the early favorite Martin Van Buren did not earn the nomination, supporters were able to sway opinion towards Polk.²²⁵ As a "dark horse" candidate Polk faced a difficult campaign against the well-known Henry Clay, but won in a very close election. A "dark horse" candidate is one who unexpectedly wins his party's nomination. Polk believed that the nation's future lay in farming and continued success in farming meant gaining new lands in the west. Polk used the phrase "54-40 or Fight" as his campaign slogan referring to his promise to claim the Oregon country to the 54th parallel for the United States. His victory in the election was due in large part to his promise to annex Texas and gain full control of the Oregon country.²²⁶

As president, Polk intended to make good on those promises. In December 1845, he signed the resolution admitting Texas into the union. Polk entered into negotiations with Britain concerning the Oregon country. Polk pushed the British to give up their claims and in 1846 his aggressive position was rewarded when the British agreed to set the boundary at the 49th parallel.²²⁷

²²³ Morgan, *Lions of the West*, 199.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 200-02.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

²²⁶ Appleby et al., *The American Journey*, 360.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

With the Oregon question settled, Polk could turn his attention to relations with Mexico. Though Mexico had accepted Texas independence, the border was still under dispute. Polk was also interested in bringing California into the United States. Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor to cross into territory between the Nueces River and Rio Grande claimed by Mexico. When shots were fired on April 25, 1846 it gave Polk the opening he needed to ask Congress to declare war.²²⁸

The Mexican War was controversial in the United States because many people viewed it as a war to expand slavery.²²⁹ Public opposition did not concern Taylor who won a number of key battles. Polk became concerned that Taylor's success in battle would lead to a nomination for President in 1848, so he replaced him with Winfield Scott.²³⁰ Scott's victory at Mexico City brought an end to the war. In the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico ceded California, and 800,000 square miles of land that makes up the current states of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Nevada as well as parts of Colorado and Wyoming. The United States paid Mexico 15 million dollars for the land and promised full citizenship to Mexican citizens who choose to stay. Polk had achieved his goal of a United States that stretched to the Pacific.²³¹ Polk left office after a single term and returned to Tennessee in March 1849. Suffering from overwork and poor health, Polk died just three months later on June 15, 1849.²³²

Slavery and Secession in Tennessee

As the turbulent 1850s drew to a close, Tennesseans found themselves divided over the question of slavery. Fertile soil and flat land made large plantations possible in West Tennessee, so the population was largely pro-slavery. West Tennessee was tied to the Deep South states not only through their shared interest in cotton, but also in their dependence on the Mississippi River as a transportation route. By contrast, in East Tennessee where rocky soil and mountains made large scale

²²⁸ Ibid., 372.

²²⁹ Ibid., 373.

²³⁰ Morgan, *Lions of the West*, 236.

²³¹ Appleby et al., *The American Journey*, 374.

²³² Morgan, *Lions of the West*, 196.

farming difficult, there were few enslaved people and less interest in expanding slavery. In Middle Tennessee enslaved people labored on tobacco plantations as well as smaller farms that produced food destined to feed enslaved populations in the Deep South.

The presidential election of 1860 was a turning point for the nation and for Tennessee. The Republicans nominated Abraham Lincoln who vowed not to interfere with slavery where it already existed, but also to stop slavery from spreading in the West.²³³ The Democratic Party could not decide on a candidate and split. Stephen Douglas, the Northern Democratic candidate, favored popular sovereignty. This policy allowed the question of slavery to be decided by voters in the territories. The Southern Democratic candidate, John Breckinridge, campaigned in favor of supporting the Dred Scott decision which stated that Congress had no power to ban slavery in the territories.²³⁴ The compromise candidate from the new Constitutional Union Party was John Bell, a Tennessean, who campaigned in favor of keeping the Union and slavery as they were. Bell received 48% of the votes in Tennessee. Breckinridge received 45%, Douglas 8%, and Lincoln none because his name did not appear on the Tennessee ballot.²³⁵

Lincoln's election led South Carolina to secede in December 1860 followed by Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and Georgia. Leaders in these states believed that Lincoln would abolish slavery despite his promises and were angry that voters in the North and West had the power to elect a candidate who did not receive any electoral votes in the South. Tennessee governor Isham Harris, a West Tennessee native, shared these views, but knew that many Tennesseans still opposed secession. Harris carefully maneuvered the state towards secession by asking the state legislature to authorize a vote on the subject on February 9, 1861.²³⁶ Secessionists and Unionists campaigned throughout the state. A state convention on secession was rejected by 55% of voters.

²³³ Appleby et al., *The American Journey*, 450.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Bergeron, Ash and Keith. *Tennesseans and Their History*, 133.

²³⁶ Bergeron, Stephen Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 134.

Voters had also been asked to select delegates to attend if the convention were held. More than 75% of the delegates selected were Unionists.²³⁷

However, Tennesseans' support of the Union was conditional. Many Tennesseans believed that states did have a right to secede and that the Union should not interfere with secession. Between February 1861 and June 1861 a number of events occurred that caused many Tennesseans to shift their support to the Confederacy.²³⁸ First, Lincoln decided to resupply the troops at Fort Sumter. This led the Confederacy to attack the fort on April 12, 1861. Just three days after the battle. Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 state militia troops to suppress the rebellion. He appealed “to all loyal citizens to favor, facilitate, and aid this effort to maintain the honor, the integrity, and the existence of our National Union.”²³⁹ This was the final straw for most of the conditional Unionists. They agreed with Governor Harris when he said that “Tennessee will not furnish a single man for the purposes of coercion, but fifty thousand, if necessary for defense of our rights.”²⁴⁰

When a second vote on secession was held on June 8, 1861, 69 percent of voters favored secession. Tennessee formally joined the Confederacy on July 2, 1861. However, Tennessee’s secession did not end the struggle between Unionists and Secessionists. East Tennesseans had overwhelmingly voted against secession in February and June. Under the leadership of Andrew Johnson, William G “Parson” Brownlow and others, plans were made for East Tennessee to secede from Tennessee and form a new Union state.²⁴¹ Governor Harris believed that East Tennessee would eventually come to support secession and allowed the Unionists considerable freedom to dissent until early November. Unionists plotted with Union generals in Kentucky to burn key railroad bridges along the East Tennessee & Virginia and East Tennessee & Georgia railroads prior to a Union invasion. The

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid., 135-136.

²³⁹ Lincoln, Abraham, Abraham Lincoln papers: Series 1. General Correspondence. 1833 to 1916: Abraham Lincoln, Monday, Proclamation on State Militia. 1861. Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mal0907400/>. Accessed 22 June 2021.

²⁴⁰ Isham Harris, “Message to Simon Cameron, April 15, 1861. *Messages of the Governors of Tennessee*, Vol. 5., pp. 272-273. Civil War Sourcebook, <http://www.tnsos.net/TSLA/cwsourcebook/index.php> Accessed 9 July, 2018.

²⁴¹ Bergeron, Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 139.

goal was to weaken the Confederacy by cutting Virginia off from the Confederate states of the Deep South. The invasion did not happen, but five bridges were burned, which led to a crackdown by Confederate forces and an end to any hopes of East Tennessee becoming a separate state.²⁴² However, Tennesseans continued to fight for the Union as soldiers, home guards, partisans and bushwhackers throughout the war. Hurst Nation and the Free and Independent State of Scott represented attempts by Unionists to separate themselves from Confederate Tennessee.

Generally speaking, most Unionists lived in Eastern Tennessee, but pockets of Unionists could also be found in western Tennessee along the Tennessee River. In McNairy County, people living in the southern part of the county tended to support secession, while those in the northern half opposed it.²⁴³ The leading Unionist was Fielding Hurst. Hurst was an enslaver and large landowner in McNairy County. Hurst was imprisoned in Nashville for publicly speaking out against secession. Once released, he was made a colonel by Andrew Johnson and raised the 6th Tennessee cavalry.²⁴⁴ The land controlled by Hurst and his Unionist followers came to be called Hurst Nation. The division in the county led to brutal warfare between its residents. Many homes on both sides were looted and burned during the war years.²⁴⁵

Similarly, in East Tennessee, residents of Scott County were strongly Unionist. On June 4, 1861 Senator Andrew Johnson gave a speech at the courthouse in Huntsville, the county seat, in which he condemned secession.²⁴⁶ The residents of Scott County voted against secession by the highest margin of any Tennessee county. However, their efforts could not stop Tennessee from seceding. The residents of Scott County responded by seceding from Tennessee and declaring themselves to be the “Free and Independent State of Scott.” Tennessee did not recognize Scott

²⁴² Dorothy Kelly, "[The Bridge Burnings and Union Uprising of 1861.](#)" Tennessee Ancestors 21, no. 2 (August 2005):123-129.

²⁴³ Bill Wagoner, "McNairy County." Tennessee Encyclopedia. 2018.
<https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/mcnairy-county/> Accessed 9 July, 2018.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Margaret D. Binnicker, "Scott County." Tennessee Encyclopedia. 2018.
<https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/scott-county/> Accessed 9 July, 2018.

County's independence. As in McNairy County, Scott County experienced guerilla warfare throughout the war years.²⁴⁷

The Free and Independent State of Scott and the less formally organized Hurst Nation both represented attempts to fight secession and remain true to the Union. Consciously or not, both communities drew on Watauga and the State of Franklin as examples of communities formed by and for the people they represented. Both communities endured years of brutal guerilla warfare as they sought to uphold their Unionist beliefs. Like many communities in Tennessee, Hurst Nation and the State of Scott faced challenges in forgetting the horrors of guerilla warfare as they rebuilt after the war.

The Civil War in Tennessee

Following the Battle of Fort Sumter, both the Union and Confederacy prepared for war. Winfield Scott created a three part strategy for the Union. First, the Union would use its vastly superior navy to blockade Southern ports. This effort to strangle the Confederacy was referred to as the Anaconda Plan. Secondly, the Union would advance south along the Mississippi River to disrupt lines of communication and supply and split the Confederacy in half. Lastly, they would capture the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. In contrast, the Confederate strategy was defensive. They planned to hold as much territory as possible until the Union, under pressure from France and Britain, stopped fighting. The Confederate strategy depended on cotton diplomacy, the idea that France and Britain would be forced to aid the Confederates in order to restore their supply of cotton. In reality, France and Britain chose not to involve themselves in the Civil War. Overproduction in the years before the war had left Britain with a surplus of cotton for their mills. The British also looked to other parts of their empire, notably Egypt and India, as new sources for cotton.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Eugene R. Dattel, "Cotton and the Civil War." Mississippi History Now. 2008. <http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/291/cotton-and-the-civil-war> Accessed 9 July, 2018.

Forts Henry and Donelson

The first step for the Union in fulfilling their goal of controlling the Mississippi River and dividing the Confederacy came in early 1862, when General Ulysses S. Grant and Flag-Officer Andrew H. Foote requested permission to go down the Tennessee River into northwest Tennessee. The purpose of the expedition was to capture Fort Henry, which overlooked the western section of the Tennessee River. Henry was not as strong a fort as other Southern strongholds on the Mississippi.²⁴⁹ It had been hastily constructed in June, 1861 by the 10th Tennessee Infantry and hundreds of enslaved people. Yet the Tennessee River cut Tennessee in half and dipped into Alabama, making it a crucial avenue for an advance into the Deep South. Also, capturing Fort Henry opened up the way to Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River. By February, Grant and Foote were on the move. The roads were too muddy for travel by Grant's large army, so Grant was ordered to steam down the Tennessee River with Foote's fleet. On February 5, Foote's transports deposited Grant's 15,000 soldiers below Fort Henry. The plan involved the ironclad riverboats pounding the fort from one side with Grant approaching overland from the other. When the steamers approached the fort, an artillery duel began. The ironclads were so effective that Confederate General Lloyd Tilghman surrendered in a little over an hour. Grant's troops had not even arrived. Fort Henry was in Union hands along with "seventeen heavy guns, General Lloyd Tilghman and staff, and 60 men."²⁵⁰ Also, the river belonged to the Federals all the way to Alabama. Foote's gunboats sailed down to Muscle Shoals and back harassing the Confederate navy along the way.²⁵¹

Grant planned to attack Fort Donelson the same way he had attacked Fort Henry. Foote would wear down the Confederate defenses from the river on the east. Grant would capture the fort from the west with foot soldiers. The idea was then to march on and occupy Nashville. By February

²⁴⁹ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 393.

²⁵⁰ Official records of the Union and Confederate armies. Ser. I, Vol. 7, p. 121.

²⁵¹ *O.R., Ibid.*, 153.

13, Grant's entire force of 15,000 men was in front of Donelson, gunboats and all. Foote and his navy attacked on the 14th hoping for the same result as at Fort Henry. Fort Donelson, however, proved formidable and well-equipped. By damaging a handful of Foote's vessels, Confederate gunners repulsed the attack. Grant then decided to hold his lines and wait for the boats to be repaired.²⁵²

The Confederates in Donelson, however, led by General John Floyd, Tennessee politician Gideon Pillow, and General Simon Bolivar Buckner, decided that the best thing they could do was try to break out of the fort and fight off Grant's army. On the morning of February 15, while Grant was away visiting an injured Andrew Foote, Confederate forces attacked on the Union right. The rebels shoved the Federal force back over a mile. Heavy casualties were inflicted on both sides. In confusion and exhaustion, however, the Confederates were ordered by Pillow to retreat back to their entrenchments. Considering that the Union men were out of ammunition, the Confederate force might have broken out of the Donelson siege if they had kept up the attack.²⁵³

When Grant returned and saw that the Confederates had pulled back, he assumed they were more demoralized than the Union's defeated force. "Taking advantage of this fact," Grant later reported, "I ordered a charge upon the left ..."²⁵⁴ By nightfall, Grant's men had retaken all the ground they had lost. The following morning, while Grant prepared to attack, General Buckner sent Grant a note under a flag of truce, offering to end the fighting and discuss surrender terms. Disgusted with their admission of defeat, Confederate cavalry commander Nathan Bedford Forrest led his regiment on a late-night breakout through enemy lines. Grant told Buckner that he would accept "no terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender."²⁵⁵ Buckner, trapped with his men in the fort, had no choice. That same day Grant filed a report to his superiors: "I am pleased to announce to you the unconditional surrender this morning of Fort Donelson, with 12,000 to 15,000 prisoners, at least 40 pieces of artillery, and a large amount of stores, horses, and other public property."²⁵⁶ U.S. Grant's

²⁵² O.R., Ser. I, Vol. 7, p. 159.

²⁵³ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 400-01.

²⁵⁴ O.R., Ser. I, Vol. 7, p. 159

²⁵⁵ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 402.

²⁵⁶ O.R., Ser. I, Vol. 7, p. 159

terms for Buckner's surrender earned him a nickname that stuck throughout the war: "Unconditional Surrender" Grant.

The capture of Forts Henry and Donelson were significant because they provided the Union its first foothold in the South. It also provided a much-needed morale boost to Northerners, who had been disappointed by the lack of progress in Virginia. The fall of Forts Henry and Donelson led Albert Sydney Johnston to abandon Nashville on February 23, 1862. Union troops under Don Carlos Buell occupied Nashville on February 25, making Nashville the first Confederate state capitol to come under Union control. After capturing the forts, Grant and his army moved deeper into Tennessee--all the way to the town of Pittsburg Landing, home to a small church called Shiloh. It was there, in the spring, that Grant would clash with Confederate Generals Albert Sidney Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard in one of the bloodiest battles of the war.

Battle of Shiloh

After defeating the Confederates at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, Grant continued to chase the rebels. He knew the defeated army was regrouping around Corinth, Mississippi, and it was Grant's intention to build up his own forces and strike the enemy there. So, even with the "weather cold and roads impassable," Grant went south toward Pittsburg Landing on the Tennessee River. Grant estimated the Confederate strength at Corinth to be between 50,000 and 60,000 men.²⁵⁷ When he arrived at Pittsburg Landing, Grant did not order his soldiers to entrench, but instead waited patiently for Major-General Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio to arrive from the north. When they were united, they would have a mass of 75,000 men who were confident and ready to crush the smaller Confederate force.²⁵⁸ Although Grant had heard rumors of a Confederate force advancing on his

²⁵⁷ O.R., Ser. I, Vol. 10, pt. II, p. 40.

²⁵⁸ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 406.

location, he thought it was only a rumor. "I have scarcely the faintest idea of an attack (general one) being made upon us," Grant reported, "but will be prepared should such a thing take place."²⁵⁹

At Corinth, Generals Albert Sidney Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard were not content to dig in and wait for Grant's advance. Instead, Johnston decided to march back into Tennessee and drive Grant from the state. General Braxton Bragg brought up 15,000 men from the Gulf Coast to join the attack. In all, the Confederates had 42,000 men.²⁶⁰ Knowing that Buell was seeking to link up with Grant's army, Johnston moved out in early April, ordering his troops "forward to offer battle near Pittsburg."²⁶¹ After slight delays, Johnston's advance troops reached Grant's advance troops, and the two forces skirmished on April 5 with a small handful of casualties. Grant did not take the Confederate threat seriously.

With the element of surprise on his side Johnston sent his army charging at the Union line on the morning of April 6, 1862. According to Beauregard, the rebel soldiers advanced like an "Alpine avalanche."²⁶² The southerners pushed back Union forces all along the six mile front. Grant, still at headquarters awaiting Buell, heard the gunfire at breakfast and reached the battlefield around 9 a.m.²⁶³ The fighting proved incredibly fierce. Two large, inexperienced armies clashed and butchered each other. Bullets ripped through leaves and severed tree limbs. Smoke blanketed the field. Many soldiers, Union and Confederate, seeing action for the first time, fled horrified from the fight.

In the midst of the chaos, however, the Confederates managed to push the Federals back past Shiloh church and then to Pittsburg Landing and the river. It looked as if the Union might be routed. But at the middle of the action, along a sunken road, General Benjamin M. Prentiss and a group of brave soldiers held a small part of the collapsing Union line. The Confederates labeled this area the "Hornets' Nest".²⁶⁴ Upon Grant's order, and despite being outnumbered four to one, Prentiss

²⁵⁹ *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 10, pt. I, p. 89.

²⁶⁰ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 406.

²⁶¹ *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 10, pt. II, p. 387.

²⁶² *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 10, pt. I, p. 386.

²⁶³ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 409.

²⁶⁴ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 410.

held the sunken road for most of the day. Just before sunset, when Prentiss feared that “further resistance must result in the slaughter of every man” in his command, he surrendered his depleted force of 2,200 men.²⁶⁵

The Confederates had, as Beauregard described, won a “complete victory” on April 6, but they did so at a heavy cost.²⁶⁶ General Albert Sidney Johnston, Commander of the Army of the Mississippi (Confederate), took a bullet to his leg and bled to death. The Confederacy, it was said, would “mourn his loss, revere his name, and cherish his manly virtues.”²⁶⁷ For the Union, the defeat of April 6 was a setback. But, in the middle of the night, Buell’s army arrived. By the morning, three more divisions were ready for action. Overall, Grant commanded 25,000 more men on the morning of April 7.²⁶⁸ With renewed confidence, Grant ordered his army to attack.

Beauregard and his men were caught completely by surprise as they relaxed at the former Union camp they had captured the day before. Grant’s force swept the Confederates all the way back to the lines they possessed at the beginning of April 6. There, they stiffened and resisted. The hard fighting of the previous day resumed as if it had never quit. Beauregard saw that if he pressed the fight, his army would be destroyed. He therefore ordered a retreat. The Confederates, outnumbered and dispirited, fell back. Nathan Bedford Forrest led a number of cavalry charges to slow down the advancing Union troops, giving the Confederates time to escape.

April 7 proved a complete turnaround from the events of April 6. Instead of the complete Confederate victory which Beauregard had bragged about, his battered army staggered back into Mississippi. The Union victors, tired and bogged down in a downpour, did not offer a serious pursuit. Shiloh was over, and 20,000 men were dead or wounded. There were more casualties than all other Civil War battles up to that point combined.²⁶⁹ Yet, no ground had been gained. The Union remained at Pittsburg Landing, and the Confederates went back to Corinth. “In the pages of history the hard

²⁶⁵ O.R., Ser. I, Vol. 10, pt. I, p. 279.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 384.

²⁶⁷ O.R., Ser. I, Vol. 10, pt. I, p. 409

²⁶⁸ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 410.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 413.

won field of Shiloh [sic] will have a name among the great battlefields of the world,” stated the Memphis Daily Appeal.²⁷⁰ That publication, however, reported on what it believed to be an overwhelming Confederate victory and not a Union triumph. Regardless of the victor, the Battle of Shiloh was significant because it changed the nation’s expectations. Instead of a quick, bloodless campaign, Shiloh showed that the war would be a bitter, bloody struggle of horrendous magnitude.

Control of the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico

The battles of Fort Henry, Fort Donelson and Shiloh were all part of the Union strategy to gain control of the Mississippi River. Tennessean David Farragut played an important role in those efforts. David Glasgow Farragut was born James Glasgow Farragut in Campbell’s Station, Tennessee, an area near Knoxville, on July 5, 1801. After his birth, he was taken to New Orleans, where he was adopted by Commodore David Porter. Farragut began his service at a young age and served with his adopted father during the War of 1812. He later changed his first name to David in honor of his adopted father. Farragut was captain of the sloop Saratoga during the Mexican War.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Farragut decided to remain a U.S. naval officer, despite being a southerner by birth. Farragut was assigned to oversee the West Gulf Blockade Squadron and their operations in the Gulf of Mexico.²⁷¹ During the spring of 1862, Farragut received orders which laid out a plan for his fleet to travel up the Mississippi River and aid Union armies in their attempt to control the river and cut the Confederacy in half. One of the keys to the success of the operation was for Farragut to capture the port of New Orleans. The battle for the largest city in the South began in April 1862. Against heavy resistance, Farragut steamed his ships up the river, taking cannon fire from all sides. Confederates pushed flaming rafts into the river to set Union ships ablaze. The rebels fired from

²⁷⁰ *Memphis Daily Appeal*, April 9, 1862.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 684

incomplete ironclads still moored to their docks.²⁷² None of this stopped Farragut and his fleet. They passed the river defenses, defeated them from the north, and sailed triumphantly into the city.

With New Orleans in Union hands, Farragut took his fleet up the river, capturing cities and frustrating Confederates. The only city he failed to capture was Vicksburg, the final Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi. His accomplishments on the Mississippi earned Farragut a promotion to the rank of rear admiral. In March 1863, Farragut again sailed for Vicksburg to blockade the town. With the help of Grant's forces on the other side of the fortress, the town fell on July 4, 1863, one day after the Union victory at Gettysburg.

Farragut's next mission consisted of shutting down Confederate blockade runners. To do this, Farragut had to capture rebel ports that harbored such runners. The blockade was a crucial part of the Union strategy for defeating the Confederacy. The first harbor targeted was Mobile. Attempting to mimic his success in New Orleans, Farragut tried to run the gauntlet of Mobile's defenses. Instead of cruising through, however, the Union navy encountered Confederate water mines, called torpedoes. Several Union ships were lost due to the mines, and with the whole operation in chaos, Farragut delivered the order for which he is remembered. He strapped himself to the rigging of his flagship, the *Hartford*, and shouted the memorable phrase, "Damn the torpedoes. Full steam ahead." His ships finally passed through, and Mobile surrendered. After the capture of Mobile, Farragut was promoted to vice admiral.²⁷³ The capture of New Orleans, Vicksburg and Mobile were key to the success of the Union's Anaconda strategy of strangling the Confederacy by cutting off its access to supplies and markets to sell its cotton.

Battle of Stones River

The fall and early winter of 1862 was a difficult time for the Union army and northern morale. Although he had stopped a Confederate invasion, General George B. McClellan had failed to cut off

²⁷² McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 419-20.

²⁷³ Davis, "Farragut, David Glasgow," 684.

the fleeing Confederates and destroy Robert E. Lee's army after the Battle of Antietam. Instead, Lee's army slipped quietly back into Virginia where it would continue to cause frustration for the Federal army. In December, the Union Army of the Potomac, commanded by General Ambrose Burnside, was soundly defeated at Fredericksburg. Also, General Ulysses S. Grant, the hero of Fort Donelson and Shiloh, had failed to capture the Mississippi River post at Vicksburg. This failure was largely due to Confederate cavalry raiders, such as Nathan Bedford Forrest and Earl Van Dorn, who ran circles around Grant's plodding army cutting communication lines and confiscating supplies. Although a Confederate invasion of Kentucky had been repulsed at Perryville, General Don Carlos Buell seemingly refused to deploy his Army of the Cumberland to attack Confederate General Braxton Bragg's Army of the Tennessee. In October, Buell was replaced by William S. Rosecrans. Lincoln made it clear that if Rosecrans wanted to keep his job, he had better march against Bragg.²⁷⁴ In essence, the Union needed a victory, and Lincoln hoped Rosecrans would provide it.

In December, President Jefferson Davis visited Bragg's headquarters at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Citizens of the small town showered the beloved president with balls and dinners. While there, Davis sent a large number of Bragg's men westward to slow Grant's approach to Vicksburg. Nevertheless, Bragg considered using his weakened force to recapture Nashville. When he received news that Rosecrans was advancing from Nashville, however, Bragg decided to stay put and prepare for his enemy's arrival. In the meantime, he dispatched "Fighting Joe" Wheeler's cavalry to harass Rosecrans. Wheeler rode around Rosecrans, tore apart supply wagons, and stole ammunition.²⁷⁵ Despite Wheeler's attacks, the Union continued to advance.

By December 30, Rosecrans was in place along the Nashville Turnpike just northeast of Bragg, who was positioned by a creek called Stones River. Both Rosecrans and Bragg planned to

²⁷⁴ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 579.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 579

attack the next morning. "A fierce battle is expected to-morrow [sic] by the full force of both armies," predicted Confederate Governor of Tennessee, Isham G. Harris.²⁷⁶

That night, as soldiers from both sides bent over their campfires tensely anticipating battle the next morning, the army bands entered into a contest of their own. Trying to outplay one another from across the front, the Union band's version of "Yankee Doodle" was countered by a Confederate concert of "Dixie." When the Union piped "Hail Columbia," the Confederates answered with "The Bonnie Blue Flag." Finally, one band played "Home Sweet Home," a song enjoyed by both armies. Both bands eventually played the song together with thousands of troops singing in unison.²⁷⁷ The evening's camaraderie was forgotten when the soldiers found themselves pitted against one another in fierce combat.

In the early hours of New Year's Eve, Bragg struck first by charging the union's right where many soldiers were eating breakfast. The Confederates pushed back the Union flank through a thick cedar wood and out into a cotton field. The battle continued there. Many of the Confederates, overwhelmed by the sound of guns, stuffed their ears with cotton.²⁷⁸ Fighting was terribly fierce as the Southerners tried to bend back the Union flank and get between Rosecrans and Nashville, cutting his supply and escape route. Rosecrans, however, coolly rode up and down the battle line wearing a blood-splattered uniform. The blood belonged to a staff-officer whose head had been blown off by a cannonball.²⁷⁹

When Rosecrans examined the battlefield and the Confederate thrust against his right, he called off his own attack plans and concentrated on defense. As reinforcements came up to fill the torn Union line, the rebels continued to sweep back the Federals. All would have been lost had it not been for a sturdy division commanded by Brigadier General Philip Sheridan. Sheridan had predicted

²⁷⁶ *Chattanooga Daily Rebel*, January 1, 1863

²⁷⁷ James L. McDonough, "Stones River, Battle of," *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War*, Vol. IV, ed. David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2000), 1877.

²⁷⁸ "Battle of Stones River Campaign," *Tennessee Civil War Sourcebook*, 1862, Part IV, ed. James B. Jones (Nashville, TN: Tennessee Historical Commission, 2005), 173.

²⁷⁹ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 580.

Bragg's intent and therefore positioned his men in defensive positions at 4:00 a.m. In some exceptionally savage combat, Sheridan was able to hold the Confederates at bay. All three of Sheridan's brigade commanders were killed. His division lost a third of its men. The Confederates, as well, suffered heavy losses.²⁸⁰ After the initial assault, Rosecrans found his right side bent back at a right angle. At that angle was a dense patch of wilderness called the Round Forest. Bragg thought the area was of strategic importance and ordered a division, under former Vice President of the United States John C. Breckinridge, to cross Stones River from the east and charge the position. The division charged but, after a murderous engagement, fell back. At an enormous cost to themselves as well as the enemy, the Federals held. Afterward, Round Forest became known as "Hell's Half-Acre."²⁸¹

Near Murfreesboro, the year 1862 had concluded with a "very obstinate and bloody" fight.²⁸² Following December 31, Southern newspapers declared a great victory. Bragg, in a dispatch, talked about how he had driven the Union troops from every position except the extreme left. "With the exception of this point," Bragg said, "we occupy the whole field."²⁸³ Whether or not victory could be declared, one thing was certain: the fighting had been costly. "The bloodiest day of the war has closed," declared a Chattanooga newspaper.²⁸⁴ Rosecrans, however, refused to withdraw; more blood was to come.

On New Year's Day, after a small fight, a Union division moved east of Stones River and occupied a formidable hill. The following day, Bragg ordered Breckinridge to again cross the river and attack a strong Federal position. Breckinridge, under protest, carried out his orders. His division ran through the Union line. But on the other side of the river was a ridge blanketed in Union guns. The cannons opened fire and tore Breckinridge's division to shreds. After losing a third of his men, Breckinridge pulled back.²⁸⁵ The following day, January 3, Rosecrans's army was reinforced. Seeing

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 580.

²⁸¹ McDonough, "Stones River, Battle of," 1879.

²⁸² Nashville *Dispatch*, January 1, 1863.

²⁸³ *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 20, pt. I, p. 662

²⁸⁴ Chattanooga *Daily Rebel*, January 2, 1863

²⁸⁵ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 582; McDonough, "Stones River, Battle of," 1879.

the strengthened enemy in front, Bragg thought it wise to retreat. The Confederates abandoned Murfreesboro and fled south to Tullahoma. The two armies suffered an estimated 24,645 combined casualties. The Battle of Stone's River was significant because it gave the Union the victory it so badly needed.²⁸⁶ After the first day, the situation looked dire for the Union and promising for the Confederates, but the Federals stood firmly, and forced Bragg and his Army of Tennessee to withdraw.

Battle of Chickamauga

Branching off the Tennessee River north of Chattanooga and snaking its way down across the Georgia line is a small waterway called Chickamauga Creek. In the autumn of 1863 the Union Army of the Cumberland and the Confederate Army of Tennessee, clashed with one another. Two days of savage fighting, resulted in 34,000 casualties. Chickamauga proved the costliest battle of the western theater and second only to Gettysburg as the bloodiest struggle of the Civil War.

Throughout the summer of 1863, Union General William S. Rosecrans had chased Braxton Bragg's Confederate army out of Middle Tennessee. "I have now to repeat," Rosecrans communicated to Edwin Stanton, U.S. Secretary of War, "that the rebel army has been forced from its strong intrenched [sic] positions at Shelbyville and Tullahoma, and driven over the Cumberland Mountains."²⁸⁷ Eventually, Bragg was forced to hunker down in Chattanooga, an important Confederate railroad hub linking the Deep South to Virginia. After a summer of defeat, the morale of Bragg's army declined. Abraham Lincoln, therefore, urged Rosecrans to dislodge Bragg and make headway into Georgia. Taking time to secure his supply train, Rosecrans advanced south on August 16 with the intention of crossing the Tennessee River and getting south of Chattanooga into Georgia to destroy the railroad from Atlanta. His 60,000 men had no trouble getting across the river and to the south of Bragg.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ McDonough, *Ibid*

²⁸⁷ O.R., Ser. I, Vol. 23, pt. II, p. 518.

²⁸⁸ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 670.

“No effort will be spared to bring him (Rosecrans) to an engagement whenever the chances shall favor us,” reported Bragg on September 4.²⁸⁹ On September 8, he and his Army of Tennessee abandoned Chattanooga and crept into Georgia. In Georgia, their spirits sank. “The case demands great activity,” Confederate President Jefferson Davis said in the hope that Bragg would turn around and attack Rosecrans and push him back into Tennessee.²⁹⁰ On September 10, Rosecrans and the Federals entered Chattanooga. In the meantime, a force under Confederate General James Longstreet had been dispatched from Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia and sent south to bolster Bragg. By the time the reinforcements arrived, Bragg’s army was roughly the same size as Rosecrans. With his ranks swollen, Bragg decided to act. He decided to go north, advance on Rosecrans, and “turn on him in the direction of Chattanooga.”²⁹¹ Bragg sent false deserters to the Union army who reported that the Confederates were retreating. Bragg hoped the Yankees would relax in the thought that the rebels were pitiful and defeated. Bragg then planned to attack and destroy Rosecrans. Yet, for a week, Bragg tried and failed to get attacks organized. Each time, his subordinates failed to carry out orders. In the meantime, Rosecrans realized what the Confederates were up to and positioned his own force along the West Chickamauga Creek.²⁹² But when Longstreet’s troops began to arrive on September 8, Bragg had more men than Rosecrans. Longstreet’s advance columns were led by John Bell Hood, whose arm hung in a sling following a wound sustained at Gettysburg. Bragg planned to attack as soon as possible. He told his troops that they “should march against the enemy and crush him.”²⁹³ The following morning, on September 19, the two armies collided, and the fight began.

Bragg proved insistent in his aim to destroy Rosecrans’s left flank. Wave after wave of Confederate assaults were pushed back by the Union corps commanded by George H. Thomas. The fighting was furious and the losses heavy on both sides. Thomas’s men held back the rushing

²⁸⁹ O.R., Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. II, p. 21.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 22

²⁹² McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 671-72.

²⁹³ O.R., Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. II, p. 76.

Confederates all day. “We drove the enemy in front of us steadily to-day [sic],” Thomas reported.²⁹⁴

His corps, however, had been damaged badly. On the evening of the 19th, he messaged Rosecrans: “I should very much like to have [re-enforcements sent] up to support my left.”²⁹⁵

The following morning, September 20, Bragg reorganized his strategy. Instead of an all out offensive against Rosecrans’s left, Bragg imagined an attack in which his army would advance in steps at coordinated times to hit all of the Federal line in tandem. On Bragg’s order, the first piece of the chessboard went into motion, but it was soon apparent that the attack would not be coordinated properly. Bragg’s subordinates again failed him, so just before noon, Bragg called off the attack and commanded Longstreet to attack the Union front “with everything he had.”²⁹⁶ Longstreet advanced. Rosecrans, as he had all day, moved divisions here and there attempting to fill any holes in his line. Somehow, during the chaos of battle, Rosecrans had moved a division from the line to fill a hole where one did not exist. Meanwhile, he had created a hole where that division had been. Longstreet and his veterans from Virginia charged directly into this hole and found themselves breaching the Federal line and rolling up its flank. Union soldiers on both sides of the hole fled in terror. Longstreet overran one-third of Rosecrans’s entire army and sent them dashing back toward Chattanooga. As Union soldiers, Rosecrans included, raced from the field, George Thomas formed a new line to make a last stand. “The hardest fighting I have seen to-day is now going on here,” said Brigadier General, and future U.S. President, James A. Garfield.²⁹⁷ As they had done the day before, Thomas’s men withstood repeated Confederate attacks before themselves dropping back toward Chattanooga. For his stand and his leadership, Thomas was thereafter nicknamed the “Rock of Chickamauga”.²⁹⁸

The Confederates won an overwhelming victory. The Union was pushed back to Chattanooga. Bragg, however, did not push the advantage and destroy Rosecrans before he could reach fortified Chattanooga. Looking over his army, Bragg was horrified at the 20,000 casualties they had suffered.

²⁹⁴ O.R., Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. I, p. 134.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

²⁹⁶ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 672.

²⁹⁷ O.R., Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. I, p. 141.

²⁹⁸ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom.*, 672-73.

His inability to follow up the victory, however, would haunt Bragg as his own leadership would be called into question. On the Union side, Rosecrans realized what a complete failure he had suffered at Chickamauga. “We have met with a severe disaster,” he reported. “The extent of it is not yet known.”

²⁹⁹ Chickamauga is significant both because it led to the Battle of Lookout Mountain (Chattanooga) and because of the huge number of casualties on both sides. The *Memphis Daily Appeal* called the battle “one of the most desperate struggles that has been witnessed during the war.”³⁰⁰

Chattanooga Campaign

In the fall of 1863, following the defeat at Chickamauga, General William S. Rosecrans and his Army of the Cumberland retreated back to Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Confederates, led by Braxton Bragg, slowly pursued and laid siege to the city in the hope that they could starve Rosecrans into surrender. After the horrific fight at Chickamauga, both armies were battle-weary. Bragg, struggling with conflict in his own high command, dreamed of a triumphant recapture of Chattanooga. Rosecrans, on the other side, seemed lost in a haze of disorientation. He had fled Chickamauga while one of his own generals, George H. Thomas, stayed and fought and averted an overwhelming Union disaster. President Lincoln said Rosecrans was “confused and stunned like a duck hit on the head.”³⁰¹ Therefore, the commanders of both fatigued armies were themselves plagued with troubles. These details set the stage for the critical fight at Chattanooga and the Battle of Lookout Mountain.

At the start of the siege, the Confederates occupied the heights around the city, notably Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain. In the west, they guarded the river roads. The only route for Union supplies to reach the army was over the Cumberland Mountains. Even if the heights could be crossed, the area teemed with Confederate cavalry who stalked the land in pursuit of Union supply wagons.³⁰² With the Union Army of the Cumberland on the verge of destruction, Lincoln took action.

²⁹⁹ O.R., Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. I, p. 142.

³⁰⁰ *Memphis Daily Appeal*, September 21, 1863

³⁰¹ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 675.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

He founded the Division of the Mississippi, which covered the area from the Mississippi River to the Appalachian Mountains, and placed at its head the hero of Vicksburg, General Ulysses S. Grant. Before Grant had even entered Tennessee, he ordered Thomas to replace Rosecrans. Shortly after Grant's arrival in Chattanooga, Union troops skirmished and opened a gap west of the city and began to receive supplies. Soldiers dubbed this route the "cracker line."³⁰³ Once Grant had secured a route for supplies, he decided to attack and break the siege. For three weeks, the two armies faced each other and did not blink. During this time, Sam Davis, a Confederate scout, was captured by the Union near Pulaski. Davis was carrying information about Union troop movements near Nashville for General Bragg. Davis, who refused to name his informant, was convicted for spying and executed on November 27, 1863.³⁰⁴

While waiting for Grant to attack, the Confederates made a critical mistake. Jefferson Davis had deemed it "essential" to wipe out the Federal troops in Chattanooga, but he also desired to recapture Knoxville, which was occupied by Union General Ambrose Burnside.³⁰⁵ Therefore, Davis and Bragg decided to send Longstreet and his men, who had dutifully occupied Lookout Mountain up until that time, north to Knoxville to dislodge Burnside. There, on November 29, Longstreet would be soundly defeated at Fort Sanders. Bragg was left with fewer men to fight Grant. By contrast, the Army of the Cumberland (Union) had added 37,000 men since the defeat at Chickamauga.

On November 24, Grant attacked. Grant had planned to attack both ends of Bragg's army. He intended to leave the center alone and only use Thomas's men as a threat. On the morning of the 24th, Grant ordered Hooker's men to scramble up the slope of Lookout Mountain, which lay on the Confederate left flank. The Federals struck at the relatively easy lower section of the mountain and chased the few Confederates guards up the slope to the peak. Through fallen trees and over boulders and crags the two forces clashed. Fog blanketed the peak at times and gave rise to stories

³⁰³ Ibid., 676.

³⁰⁴ The Historic Sam Davis Home and Foundation, "Who Was Sam Davis." <https://www.samdavishome.org/sam-davis-boy-hero> accessed 14 June 2021.

³⁰⁵ Bruce Catton, *Never Call Retreat, The Centennial History of the Civil War*, Vol. 3 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965), 260-61.

which depicted a legendary “battle above the clouds.” Hooker’s soldiers claimed the mountain after suffering less than 500 casualties. In response, Bragg pulled back his men to Missionary Ridge.³⁰⁶

Earlier that day, Grant had ordered an assault on a hill north of Missionary Ridge. However, he discovered the hill was not part of the Missionary Ridge. Grant then ordered a “limited assault” against Missionary Ridge by troops led by George H. Thomas. Thomas instead charged the entrenched Confederate lines with 23,000 men.³⁰⁷ Thomas’s army ripped through the battle-worn rebels. Then, seeing they were in range of Confederate gunners on the Missionary Ridge heights, they continued the assault. The Federals stormed upward, all the while chanting “Chickamauga! Chickamauga!” and the terrified Confederate defenders turned and ran. Bragg was puzzled by the “bad conduct in veteran troops who had never before failed in any duty assigned to them.”³⁰⁸ Some Union troops referred to their victory as a “miracle at Missionary Ridge.”³⁰⁹ Whatever had happened, one fact was certain: the Confederates had been sorely beaten, and Bragg’s army had been kicked out of Tennessee.

The Union victory at Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge was significant for several reasons. First, it improved Northern morale. Second, the victory at Chattanooga showed Grant to be the top commander of Union forces, a title that would be officially bestowed upon him the following spring. Third, the defeat placed the Confederate on the defensive for the remainder of the war and opened up the Deep South to Union invasion. Lastly, the loss at Chattanooga once again dashed Confederate morale and made winning the war more improbable.

Johnsonville

After the fall of Atlanta in September 1864, John Bell Hood tried to draw Sherman’s forces into Tennessee by threatening their supply lines. As part of this plan, Nathan Bedford Forrest moved his

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 262-63; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 677-78.

³⁰⁷ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 678.

³⁰⁸ O.R., Ser. I, Vol. 31, pt. II, p. 666.

³⁰⁹ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 680.

forces to Johnsonville on the Tennessee River near the Kentucky line. Johnsonville was the site of a Union supply depot guarded by United States Colored Troops. Forrest had previously faced USCT troops at Fort Pillow near Memphis in April. The Bureau of Colored Troops was established on May 22, 1863 to oversee the various units of Black troops that had been raised in the North and in Union controlled areas of the South. While units raised in the North such as the famous 54th Massachusetts, were generally made up of men who had been born free, units raised in the South were often composed of men who had self emancipated.³¹⁰ The USCT certificate of enlistment for Dennis Morgan shows that military officials were aware and welcomed these individuals. The form recorded the name of the enslaver and a note at the bottom advised that one copy of the form would be given to the "alleged owner."³¹¹ USCT troops were initially restricted from combat and often served garrisoned forts and other positions.³¹²

In April, 1864 Forrest's troops attacked Fort Pillow which was garrisoned by USCT troops and Tennessee Unionists. The Confederates outnumbered the fort's defenders who attempted to surrender. However, approximately half of the 600 men in the fort were killed as they attempted to surrender or in the aftermath of the battle. USCT soldiers made up 67% of the dead.³¹³ Thomas Adison of the 6th United States heavy artillery gave testimony about Fort Pillow to the Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War. Adison testified "After I surrendered I did not go down the hill. A man shot me under the ear, and I fell down and said to myself, 'If he don't shoot me anymore this won't hurt me.' One of their officers came along and hallooed, "Forrest says, no quarter! no quarter! " and the next one hallooed, " Black flag! black flag! "³¹⁴

³¹⁰ Budge Weidman, "Black Soldiers in the Civil War," National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/blacks-civil-war/article.html> accessed 07 July 2021.

³¹¹ "Certificate of enlistment for Dennis Morgan into the United States Colored Troops," Tennessee State Library and Archives, <https://cdm15138.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll9/id/16/rec/1> accessed 07 July 2021.

³¹² Weidman, Black Soldiers in the Civil War"

³¹³ *Ibid*, 321.

³¹⁴ United States. Congress. Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. "Fort Pillow massacre." 1864. Making of America. University of Michigan. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=moa&cc=moa&sid=95e3f6e828e116b80d4cccd93c806bc1&view=text&rgn=main&idno=AAW7861.0001.001> Accessed 14 June, 2021.

Another survivor, Elias Falls, testified that "They killed all the men after they surrendered, until orders were; given to stop [by Forrest]; they killed all they came to, white and black, after they had surrendered."³¹⁵ Whether Forrest ordered the killings or lost control of his men remains unclear. The Fort Pillow Massacre was widely publicized in the North and became a rallying cry for Union troops. It was against this background that Forrest's troops attacked the USCT troops at Johnsonville on November 4, 1864. The Union commanders burned the transports, barges and gunboats docked there to prevent Forrest's men from capturing them. The fire spread to the warehouses along the dock. Before Union reinforcements could arrive from Nashville, Forrest retreated under the cover of darkness. Forrest estimated that the supplies and vessels destroyed were worth \$6.7 million, although the Union estimates were much lower. The attack at Johnsonville led to rumors of a Confederate invasion in the midwest, but ultimately did little to change the outcome of the war. Forrest and Hood had hoped that the destruction of the supplies would stop Sherman's advance through Georgia. However, the raid did not stop Sherman or prevent Hood's defeat at Nashville in November.³¹⁶

The Battle of Franklin

By the fall of 1864, Union victories at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Lookout Mountain (Chattanooga) had decimated the Confederate armies and dramatically reduced the territory under Confederate control. The Union blockade had created dramatic shortages of everything from salt to shoes that affected soldiers and civilians alike. Despite these challenges, the Confederates refused to admit defeat. Thus, while William Tecumseh Sherman marched his army across Georgia to the sea, Confederate General John Bell Hood, a hero at both Gettysburg and Chickamauga (where he lost his right leg), pushed his Army of Tennessee into a campaign where he hoped to recapture the Volunteer

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Paul Ashdown, "Battle of Johnsonville." Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture. Tennessee Historical Society. 2018. <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/battle-of-johnsonville/> 5 June 2019

State, move into Virginia, link up with Robert E. Lee, and annihilate both Sherman and Ulysses S. Grant.

Hood's plan was overambitious and, in a sense, delusional. One historian has written that Hood's plan "seemed to have been scripted in never-never land."³¹⁷ Moving northward into Tennessee with 40,000 men, Hood tangled with the Federal Army of the Ohio led by Generals John M. Schofield and George H. Thomas. In late November 1864, Hood faced Schofield at Franklin just south of Nashville. The Battle of Franklin was a disaster for the Confederacy both in terms of casualties and morale.

At the start of his campaign, Hood had little problem advancing through Tennessee. He had sent ahead cavalry, commanded by General Nathan Bedford Forrest, to ride around the enemy and cause chaos much like Stonewall Jackson had in the Shenandoah in 1862. After a small skirmish, Union forces held off rebel attacks but abandoned Columbia and looked to be heading north for the fortifications at Nashville. "The enemy evacuated Columbia last night and are retreating toward Nashville," Bell alerted the Confederate War Department. "Our army is moving forward. I have had no difficulty about supplies, and anticipate none in the future."³¹⁸ By the end of November, Schofield had positioned his army at the crossing of the Harpeth River at Franklin, which sat fifteen miles south of Nashville.³¹⁹

Hood had taken over the Army of Tennessee from Joseph Johnston during the defense of Atlanta. For this reason, Hood believed that the army had been trained only to fight on the defensive and did not possess an attacking spirit. Therefore, to test his troops' bravery, Hood ordered a frontal assault against Schofield's entrenched position. Hood's subordinates protested the attack, but he thought their complaints were evidence of the army's lack of fighting spirit. Nevertheless, the Confederates faced a larger, well-protected enemy supported by artillery batteries. On the other hand, the rebel

³¹⁷ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 811.

³¹⁸ *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 45, pt. I, p. 1254.

³¹⁹ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 812.

artillery had yet to make it to Franklin with the rest of the army. And, yet, despite all of these disadvantages, Hood stood firm on his order to attack. So, on November 30, the assault commenced.

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Across the field stormed 22,000 Confederates, many of them barefoot. Contrary to what Hood believed about his army's offensive capability, his soldiers charged courageously and reached the Union ranks. Sam Watkins, a Confederate soldier from Maury County, later described the desperate combat in his memoir *Company Aytch: Or, a Side Show of the Big Show*:

"Forward, men," is repeated all along the line. A sheet of fire was poured into our very faces, and for a moment we halted as if in despair, as the terrible avalanche of shot and shell laid low those brave and gallant heroes, whose bleeding wounds attested that the struggle would be desperate. Forward, men! The air loaded with death-dealing missiles. Never on this earth did men fight against such terrible odds. It seemed that the very elements of heaven and earth were in one mighty uproar. Forward, men! And the blood spurts in a perfect jet from the dead and wounded. The earth is red with blood. It runs in streams, making little rivulets as it flows. Occasionally there was a little lull in the storm of battle, as the men were loading their guns, and for a few moments it seemed as if night tried to cover the scene with her mantle. The death-angel shrieks and laughs and old Father Time is busy with his sickle, as he gathers in the last harvest of death, crying, More, more, more! while his rapacious maw is glutted with the slain."³²¹

The fighting continued well after dark as Hood's army tried again and again to break Schofield's line. Finally, near midnight, the Union troops fell back and moved toward the fortifications of Nashville.

While on the surface, the battle appeared a Confederate victory, the heavy toll taken by Hood's army transformed Franklin into a grievous defeat. The Army of Tennessee (Confederate) had lost

³²⁰ *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 45, pt. I, p. 1254.

³²¹ Sam R. Watkins, *Co. Aytch, or, A Side Show of the Big Show* (Chattanooga, Tennessee: The Times Printing Company, 1900), PDF e-book, 217.

almost 7,000 men, nearly three times as many as Schofield's Army of Ohio (Union). Twelve Confederate generals had been killed. The ones lucky enough to survive were exhausted and crestfallen. As a fighting force, Hood's army had been rendered insignificant. And yet Hood still lived in a land of delusion. He ordered a proclamation to be read at the head of each regiment.

The commanding general congratulates the army upon the success achieved yesterday over our enemy by their heroic and determined courage. The enemy have been sent in disorder and confusion to Nashville, and while we lament the fall of many gallant officers and brave men, we have shown to our countrymen that we can carry any position occupied by our enemy.³²²

Hood would follow the Union army to Nashville and besiege the city. A Union newspaper in Knoxville described Hood's campaign. It read, "Hood, without any base of supplies, without any matured plans of operation, and with the recklessness of a fool, attacked our forces in their strong works at Franklin,"

³²³ The Battle of Franklin is significant because it crippled Hood's army. Never again would the Confederates be able to challenge the Union for superiority in Tennessee.

Battle of Nashville

Confederate General John Bell Hood's Army of Tennessee had suffered nearly 7,000 casualties at Franklin. Nevertheless, in December 1864, Hood and his limping troops pursued the Union Army to Nashville. Nashville had been under Federal control since February 1862. William Driver, adventurer and Nashville businessman, had given the Union troops his flag which he nicknamed "Old Glory" to be flown over the state capital. Hood's men besieged the city and 60,000 Union soldiers under George H. Thomas. Hood hoped to receive reinforcements from across the Mississippi River, but the Union navy

³²² *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 45, pt. II, p. 628.

³²³ *Brownlow's Knoxville Whig, and Rebel Ventilator*, December 7, 1864.

patrolled the waters and kept any reinforcements west of the river.³²⁴ Hood waited for Thomas to attack.

However, bad weather prevented Thomas from doing so. Thomas's inaction not only dismayed Hood but worried Union leadership as well. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton complained that Thomas had adopted the "McClellan and Rosecrans strategy of do nothing and let the rebels raid the country." Ulysses S. Grant also voiced displeasure at Thomas's perceived half hearted approach at Nashville. "If Hood is permitted to remain quietly about Nashville, you will lose all the road back to Chattanooga, and possibly have to abandon the line of the Tennessee," Grant wrote Thomas. "Should he attack you it is all well, but if he does not you should attack him before he fortifies."³²⁵

On December 15, 1864, as the fog lifted from the cold ground, Thomas ordered 50,000 soldiers, including members of the United States Colored Troops (USCT), to smash into Hood's 25,000 men. Thomas distracted Hood by launching sporadic attacks on his right side, while pounding Hood's left. Hood was confused and postponed reinforcing his left for most of the day. By the time he sent reinforcements, it was too late. As night fell, Hood's battered left side gave way, and his entire force fell back two miles south and reformed in a much shorter defensive line.³²⁶

The following day, December 16, Thomas's army again surged forward with members of the USCT leading the charge at Overton's Hill. Thomas was one of the few Union generals who believed that Black troops could fight as well as white troops and gave the USCT a chance to prove themselves in battle. The success of the USCT troops' assault on Overton's Hill proved the truth of Decatur Chapin's statement to his brother that "Negro soldiers...make the best we have. They are bold and daring and will hazard anything commanded by their officers."³²⁷

³²⁴ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 813

³²⁵ *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 45, pt. II, pp. 15-17.

³²⁶ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 813-15; Richard M. McMurry, *John Bell Hood and the War for Southern Independence* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 179.

³²⁷ Decatur Chapin, "Letter to his Brother, January 10, 1865." Tennessee State Library and Archives. <http://cdm15138.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15138coll6/id/6844/rec/7> Accessed 10 July, 2018.

Another innovative aspect of Thomas' plan was to have his cavalry dismount and then attack using repeating rifles. These weapons fired seven shots compared to the single shot muzzle-loading rifles of the infantry. Amidst rain and a dark sky, Confederate units crumbled. Thousands of defeated troops threw down their weapons to either flee or surrender.³²⁸ Rebel commanders tried to make a new line at Brentwood, but as Tennessee Private Sam Watkins wrote, "the line they formed was like trying to stop the current of Duck river with a fish net."³²⁹ Hood's army was in shambles.

"Hood can't make another day's such fight, while Thomas is in good condition to press him," Union Secretary of War Edwin Stanton reported.³³⁰ For weeks, the pursuit raged southward, as Union cavalry tramped through thick mud and chased remnants of the Army of Tennessee into Alabama and Mississippi. Confederate armies would never challenge the Union for control of Tennessee again. The Confederate defeat at Nashville was significant because it utterly destroyed any hope for Confederate victory in the western half of the Confederacy. Hood's failure in Tennessee, combined with Sherman's capture of Savannah, made December 1864 a completely disastrous month for the Confederacy.

The Freedmen's Bureau and Fisk University

In March 1865, President Lincoln and Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau to assist formerly enslaved people as well as white Southerners who had been displaced by fighting. The Freedmen's Bureau carried out a number of functions in the South. The agency provided food, clothing, shelter and medical care for those in need. It also protected freed people from exploitation from their former

³²⁸ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 815.

³²⁹ Watkins, *Co. Aytch*, 217.

³³⁰ *New-York Tribune*, December 19, 1864.

enslavers. Agents investigated claims of abuse by formerly enslaved people and helped set employment contracts. One of the agency's most important functions was to establish schools.³³¹ In Nashville, Clinton B. Fisk, leader of the Freedmen's Bureau in Tennessee, gave a former army barracks to establish a school for Blacks in 1865. The school, which was known as Fisk School in his honor, opened in January of 1866 to students of all ages who wanted to learn. One year later, the school was incorporated as Fisk University and was open to students of all races. The school quickly fell on hard times and was nearly bankrupt by 1871. In a last ditch effort to raise money for the school, a group of Fisk students began to tour the nation singing spirituals.³³² The Fisk Jubilee Singers were an immediate sensation. In 1873, they performed for President Grant at the White House and for Queen Victoria. Fisk University continued to prosper in the early 20th century. Students from Fisk including W.E.B. DuBois, Diane Nash and John Lewis played a key role in the Civil Rights Movement.³³³

The Black Codes

The Thirteenth Amendment, approved by Congress in January 1865, completed the task of abolishing slavery that the Emancipation Proclamation had begun. Almost immediately there was backlash in the southern states as Freedmen and women began to assert their rights. Southern landowners wanted to continue to exploit Blacks as agricultural workers so southern legislatures passed a series of laws known as black codes.³³⁴

The black codes were modeled on the slave codes which had existed before the Civil War to control enslaved populations and discourage rebellion. The laws allowed officials to arrest any

³³¹ Appleby et al., *The American Journey*, 502.

³³² "Fisk University History." Fisk University. 2018. <https://www.fisk.edu/about/history> Accessed 12 July 2018.

³³³ "Today in History- January 9." Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/january-09/> Accessed 12 July, 2018.

³³⁴ Appleby et al., *The American Journey*, 505.

unemployed or homeless Black person as a vagrant and bind him or her to a term of service with a white employer until the fine was paid. Orphaned Black youths could be bound as unpaid “apprentices” to their former enslavers.³³⁵ Blacks and many white Northerners saw the black codes as nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to reestablish slavery. In response to the black codes, Congress took two important actions in 1866. First, it reauthorized and extended the powers of the Freedmen’s Bureau which had been established by Lincoln just before his assassination. Second, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866. These actions set Congress on a collision course with President Johnson.

Impeachment of Andrew Johnson

Andrew Johnson was born on December 29, 1808 in Raleigh, North Carolina. Johnson's family could not afford to send him to school. Instead he was apprenticed to a tailor, but ran away. Johnson moved to Greeneville, TN in 1826 where he opened a tailor shop and married. His wife, Eliza McCardle Johnson, tutored him in math, reading and writing. Johnson was eventually successful enough to purchase property and enslaved persons who worked as servants in the Johnson home.³³⁶

Johnson began his political career in 1829 as an alderman. In the 1830s Johnson was elected to the Tennessee legislature where he served several terms. Johnson was elected to the House of Representatives in 1843. As a politician, Johnson always favored the poor over the rich and wanted to give federal lands in the west to settlers. However, Johnson also believed that the Constitution guaranteed the right to own enslaved people. Johnson became governor of Tennessee in 1853 and left the governorship in 1857 to become a Senator.³³⁷

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ “Andrew Johnson,” History Channel. <https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/andrew-johnson> Accessed 10 July 2018.

³³⁷ Ibid.

When the secession crisis broke out in 1860, Johnson traveled across the state urging Tennesseans to remain loyal to the Union. Even after Tennessee seceded in June 1861, Johnson refused to give up his seat in the Senate. He was the only Southern Democrat who did not resign. In 1862 Lincoln appointed Johnson military governor of Tennessee. As governor, Johnson tried to restore federal authority in Tennessee.³³⁸

In 1864 Lincoln selected Johnson as his vice-president because he was both a Southerner and a Unionist. Following Lincoln's assassination on April 15, 1865, Johnson was sworn in as the nation's 17th president. Johnson faced the difficult task of reconstructing the nation in the wake of the Civil War and he soon clashed with Congress over control of Reconstruction.³³⁹ Radical Republicans wanted to punish the Confederate states for the act of treason that had plunged the nation into a bloody four year war. They believed that Johnson was too lenient towards Confederates, in too much of a hurry to bring the former Confederates back into the Union, and too unwilling to give civil rights to Blacks. When Johnson vetoed the Freedmen's Bureau and the Civil Rights bill, Congress overrode his vetoes. To further limit the president's power, Congress passed the Tenure of Office act which prohibited the president from removing government officials.³⁴⁰ When Johnson removed Secretary of War Edwin Stanton from office in violation of the Tenure of Office Act, the House voted to impeach Johnson in February 1868.³⁴¹ Johnson was the first U.S. President to be impeached; however, he was acquitted and his presidency spared by a single vote in the Senate. Several of the more moderate Republicans voted not guilty because they did not think a president should be impeached for political disagreements with Congress. Johnson served out the remainder of his term, but was not nominated for re-election in 1870.

Following his one-term as president, Johnson returned to Greeneville. In 1874, he became the first former President of the United States to win a seat in the United States Senate. However, four months

³³⁸ Paul H. Bergeron, "Andrew Johnson." Tennessee Encyclopedia. 2018.
<https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/andrew-johnson/> Accessed 10 July 2018.

³³⁹ Appleby et al., *The American Journey*, 503.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 507.

³⁴¹ Bergeron, "Andrew Johnson."

after taking his seat in the Senate, Johnson suffered a stroke and died on July 31, 1875. He was buried in Greeneville wrapped in an American flag with his head resting on a copy of the Constitution.

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William Brownlow and the Constitution of 1870

To understand the roots of the Constitutional Convention of 1870, one must look back to Tennessee's Civil War experience beginning with the fight over secession. Once South Carolina seceded in December 1860, Tennesseans were roughly divided into three camps. The first camp wanted to secede wholeheartedly. The second camp wanted to remain in the Union at any cost. The third group wanted to remain in the Union, but they did not want to force other states like South Carolina to remain in the Union if they wanted out. When the question of secession was first put to voters in February 1861, 69,000 voted to remain in the Union while 58,000 voted for secession. After the Battle of Fort Sumter and President Lincoln's call for 75,000 troops, many Tennesseans in the third group changed their minds. A second vote on secession in June 1861 resulted in 105,000 votes for secession and only 47,000 against. Thus, Tennessee became the last state to join the Confederacy.³⁴³

The majority of Unionists lived in East Tennessee. William "Parson" Brownlow and Andrew Johnson were two key leaders of the movement. The Unionists wanted to form a separate state as West Virginia had done, but this was never accomplished. Instead, they settled down to endure four years of ruthless guerilla warfare in which they were sometimes the victims and sometimes the perpetrators of brutally violent acts.³⁴⁴ Ironically, Middle and West Tennessee, where most of the secessionists lived, quickly came under Federal control. President Lincoln appointed Andrew Johnson, the loyal Unionist, military governor. In an effort to bring order to Tennessee, Johnson ruled with an iron hand. His harsh mandates left many of the moderate Unionists feeling betrayed.

³⁴² Bergeron, "Andrew Johnson"

³⁴³ Bergeron, Ash and Keith. *Tennesseans and Their History*, 134-136.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 139-140.

Emancipation was an especially tricky issue in Tennessee. Many Unionists including the very vocal Brownlow opposed emancipation. In fact, Johnson asked Lincoln to exclude Tennessee from the Emancipation Proclamation because he feared that to do otherwise would drive many Tennesseans into the arms of the Confederacy.³⁴⁵

When Johnson left Tennessee to assume his duties as vice-president, he was replaced by William Brownlow. Brownlow was able to push ratification of the 14th amendment through the legislature and ensure that Tennessee would be the first Confederate state to rejoin the Union. Brownlow was not a man given to compromise. Instead of trying to reunite former Confederates (Democrats) and Unionists (Republicans) he drove them further apart with two laws. The first stripped voting rights from former Confederates in order to keep the Republicans in power. The second granted Blacks the right to vote. Voting rights or enfranchisement of Blacks angered many Conservative Republicans as well. A split developed in the Republican Party between the Radicals and Conservatives.³⁴⁶

It is not coincidental that the Ku Klux Klan was founded in Pulaski, Tennessee in 1865, the same year that Brownlow took office. Former Confederates who found themselves locked out of political power could not bear to see Black men voting when they could not. The Klan quickly evolved into a terrorist organization that used violence and threats of violence to intimidate voters and control the outcome of elections. Brownlow responded by sending out state troops to capture Klansmen, but they were largely unsuccessful in breaking up the group. When the state guard appeared, the Klansmen stopped their activities until the guard left. The state already had massive debts from the war and could not afford to maintain the state guard. Once the guard was gone, the Klansmen returned to terrorizing the countryside.³⁴⁷

In 1869, Brownlow left his post as governor to assume his duties as United States Senator. DeWitt Clinton Senter, Brownlow's successor, assumed the governorship. Senter eased the voting restrictions

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 147-149.

³⁴⁶ Hardy, William Edward, "'Fare well to all Radicals': Redeeming Tennessee, 1869-1870." PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2013.

http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/2432 Accessed 11 July 2018.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

that Brownlow had put in place on Conservative Republican voters. The Conservative Republicans favored granting suffrage to former Confederates. In order to gain the support of Conservative Republicans, Senter agreed. He appointed election commissioners who allowed more Conservatives and former Confederates to vote. The former Confederates (Democrats) saw this as their path back to political power. The former Confederates began running candidates in legislative races across the state. By 1870, the former Confederates had enough seats in the legislative branch to call for a constitutional convention.³⁴⁸

The new constitution did not disenfranchise Black voters as many of the legislators wanted, but it did completely restore voting rights to former Confederates. At a practical level there was no need to anger the federal government by denying Black voting rights on paper when the Ku Klux Klan was doing it more effectively with violence. The poll tax was further assurance that while Blacks could vote in theory, few would be able to take advantage of that right. The new constitution also contained a number of other provisions designed to weaken the power of the Radical Republicans. The constitution was overwhelmingly approved by voters in March. In November 1870, John C. Brown was elected governor of Tennessee. Brown was a Democrat, former Confederate and member of the Ku Klux Klan. His election signaled the end of the Reconstruction era in Tennessee.³⁴⁹ The experiences of Black legislators in the General Assembly show Tennessee's movement towards segregation and disenfranchisement.

Black Legislators

In 1872, Tennessee's first Black legislator, Sampson Keeble, was elected to represent Davidson County in the 38th General Assembly. Keeble, a Republican, owned a successful

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

barbershop and served on the advisory board of the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company Bank and as the treasurer of the board of directors of the Colored Agricultural and Mechanical Association.

³⁵⁰ Despite Keeble's credentials he only served one term. Between 1872 and 1887, 13 other Black men were elected to the Tennessee General Assembly. After 1887, no other Blacks were elected until A.W. Willis, who was elected in 1965. The Black legislators who served in the Tennessee General Assembly in the 19th century had a number of things in common. Nine of the men represented counties in southwest Tennessee (Shelby, Fayette, Haywood and Tipton counties). The other legislators represented Davidson, Hamilton and Montgomery counties. These counties had large populations of enslaved people prior to the Civil War and many of the formerly enslaved people had remained in the area after the war. The men shared certain demographic characteristics: eleven had been enslaved, four were attorneys, four were teachers, and seven attended college. Three of the representatives attended Fisk University, including Greene E. Evans who was part of the earliest group of Fisk Jubilee Singers. ³⁵¹

Another commonality was the lack of success these men had in preventing the passage of Jim Crow laws in Tennessee. In 1875, just after Sampson Keeble's term ended, Tennessee passed its first Jim Crow law. Jim Crow laws legalized the segregation of Black and white citizens. The laws were named after a character from a popular traveling show in the late 1800s. The Jim Crow character, played by a white actor in black face makeup, portrayed Blacks as stupid, brutish and completely inferior to whites. The 1875 law, Chapter 130 Acts of Tennessee, allowed discrimination in hotels, trains, theaters and most other public places. Under the law, business owners could simply refuse service to anyone they choose. If a patron complained, he or she could be fined up to 100 dollars. A number of the Black legislators who served in the General Assembly introduced bills to overturn or amend Chapter 130 and similar laws, but were unsuccessful. Only Styles Hutchins (Rep. Hamilton

³⁵⁰ Linda T. Wynn, "Sampson W. Keeble" Tennessee Encyclopedia, <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/sampson-w-keeble/> accessed 07 July 2021.

³⁵¹ "This Honorable Body: African American Legislators in 19th Century Tennessee." TSLA Exhibits. Tennessee State Library and Archives, 2013. <https://sharetn.gov.tnsosfiles.com/tsla/exhibits/blackhistory/index.htm> Accessed 11 July 2018.

County) had any success in passing legislation. His bills to abolish the poll tax in Chattanooga and to prevent criminals from other states from testifying in Tennessee courts were successful. In general, any legislation proposed by Tennessee's Black legislators that aimed to protect the rights granted by the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments failed.

After the end of Reconstruction, Tennessee's Black legislators faced increasing pressure from violent groups of racist whites. David Rivers represented Fayette County from 1883-1884. He was reelected in 1885, but was prevented from taking his seat when a mob of prejudiced whites drove him from Fayette County. While running for a fourth term in 1888, Samuel McElwee was targeted by white separatists in Haywood County. Armed mobs terrorized Black voters. Local officials deliberately miscounted and misreported votes to prevent McElwee from serving another term. McElwee and his family were forced to flee Haywood County and barely escaped with their lives. Like many of the other former legislators, McElwee eventually left Tennessee. The 46th General Assembly (1889-1890) was the first since 1872 to not have any Black legislators. The 46th General Assembly passed a statewide poll tax designed to greatly reduce the number of Black voters. The poll tax also meant that it would be 75 years before another Black legislator would serve in Tennessee's General Assembly.³⁵²

Public Education

Tennessee's foray into public education came in the 1820s and 30s as part of the ideals of Jacksonian Democracy. As more and more people embraced the idea that all white men had the right to participate in the political process regardless of their wealth or status, the government saw a need to educate white citizens.³⁵³ To accomplish this goal of an educated white citizenry, Tennessee established a common school fund with money from the sale of public lands. The 1834 Constitution included a mandate to promote public education. This led to the creation of a state board of common

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Bergeron, Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 129.

school commissioners who distributed the money.³⁵⁴ Despite these provisions, little real progress was made on educating white children. Wealthy white Tennesseans either hired private tutors or sent their children to exclusive private schools such as Davidson Academy.³⁵⁵ Middle class families were sometimes able to send their children to school or teach them basic math, reading and writing at home. Poor children had few if any opportunities to learn.³⁵⁶

Black children also had limited educational opportunities. Enslaved people were forbidden by law from learning to read or write, though many learned in secret or with the silent consent of their enslavers.³⁵⁷ Educational opportunities for free Blacks were also limited. In 1833, Nashville barber Alphonso Sumner opened a clandestine school for Black children in Nashville. Sumner's position as barber to Nashville's white elite made him confident that the authorities would turn a blind eye to the school as long as he taught the children of free persons. One of his first pupils, James P. Thomas was the son of Judge John Catron and Sally Thomas.³⁵⁸ Thomas had gained her freedom and opened a successful business as a laundress who catered to wealthy clients. Sumner's school was forced to close in 1836 when Sumner was forced to flee Nashville after being whipped for supposedly writing letters to two self-emancipated men in Michigan.³⁵⁹ Other Black operated schools for Black children operated in Nashville between 1838 and the Civil War. However, the cost of tuition meant many children could not attend.³⁶⁰ Additionally, the increasing fear of many whites that educated Blacks would lead an insurrection with the goal of to "fighting their way to a free state," meant that Black operated schools were frequently forced to move or close to avoid severe consequences for the teachers.³⁶¹

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Timothy Augustus Sweatman, "The Athens of the West: Education in Nashville, 1780-1860" (1996). Masters Theses & Specialist Projects. Paper 3038. <https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/3038>, 23-25.

³⁵⁶ Crystal Anne deGeogry, "Raising a Nonviolent Army: Four Nashville Black Colleges and the Century-Long Struggle for Civil Rights, 1830s-1930s" (2011). Ph.D Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, <https://ir.vanderbilt.edu/handle/1803/11519?show=full> 17.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 5.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 7.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 8.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 14.

After his election in 1853, Andrew Johnson set out to reform and improve the white public education system. Johnson, who grew up poor and did not learn to read until adulthood, knew firsthand the difference that education could make in one's life. Johnson urged the legislature to provide more funds for schools with a property tax and poll tax. Both taxes were approved, nearly doubling the amount of money available for schools. As a result, the number of schools increased rapidly and Johnson became known as the "Father of Public Education in Tennessee."³⁶²

Unfortunately, these improvements were short lived. Many schools closed during the chaotic Civil War years. School reopened during the Reconstruction period and for the first time Black children received a free public education as well. However, Conservative Republicans and Democrats opposed the tax increases that funded the schools and particularly despised the idea of tax dollars funding education for Black students.³⁶³ When the Conservatives took control of the legislature in 1869, they abolished the state education system and repealed most of the taxes that had funded it. Control over schools was returned to individual counties, but counties were not required to provide any public education.³⁶⁴ The 1870 Constitution exhorted the General Assembly to "cherish literature and science," and required that money from the poll tax and common school fund be used for schools.³⁶⁵ However, it did not create any specific requirements for education. Additionally, the 1870 Constitution mandated the segregation of schools stating that "No school established or aided under this section shall allow white and negro children to be received as scholars together in the same school."³⁶⁶

³⁶² Bergeron, Ash and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 129.

³⁶³ Hardy, "'Fare well to all Radicals'"

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Tennessee's Constitution of 1870. Tennessee State Library and Archives. 2018.

<http://cdm15138.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/tfd/id/584/rec/1> Accessed 11 July, 2018.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

The Ku Klux Klan and Vigilantism

The Ku Klux Klan was formed in Pulaski, Tennessee between December 1865 and May 1866. Its founding members were six well educated former members of the Confederate army. They claimed that they originally intended the organization to be nothing more than a social club modeled on a popular fraternity. However, the organization quickly became something much more sinister: a paramilitary group that used violence and intimidation tactics on anyone who opposed their vision of a country ruled by white men.³⁶⁷

The name Ku Klux was derived from the Greek word Kuklos meaning “circle” and “klan” was added for alliterative value. Following the fraternity tradition, the men developed secret signals and codes for passing messages. They created coded titles like Grand Cyclops (president) and NightHawks (messengers) and rituals including hazing of new members. The original six then donned some sheets with holes cut out for the eyes and began riding around the countryside crashing parties and playing practical jokes. As others became aware of the group, membership grew and new clubs or dens were created in surrounding counties.³⁶⁸

According to John Lester, one of the original Klansmen, the men only gradually realized that they could use their costumes and anonymity to frighten Blacks. However, some historians find this story doubtful. They believe that the group had intimidation of Black citizens as its main purpose from the beginning. The 1866 Civil Rights Act had declared Blacks to have the same rights as whites. This likely horrified the former Confederates who had prospered under a legal system that denied equal rights to Blacks. On May 1, 1866 a confrontation between discharged USCT troops and policemen in

³⁶⁷ Susan Campbell Bartoletti. *They Called Themselves the K.K.K.: The Birth of An American Terrorist Group*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2010). 13-16.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

Memphis was followed by two days of racial violence. Congress sent a special committee to Memphis to investigate the events. The Congressional Committee determined that

“the outbreak of the disturbance resulting from collision between some men and discharged colored soldiers was seized upon as a pretext for an organized and bloody massacre of the colored people of Memphis, regardless of age, sex, or condition, inspired by the teachings of the press, and led on by sworn officers of the law composing the city government and others.”³⁶⁹

Three days of violence left forty-six Blacks and two whites dead, five Black women raped and 75 people injured. Ninety-one homes, four churches and eight schools belonging to Black people were burned. The massacre also known as the Memphis Race Riots of May 1866 may have been the real motivation for founding the organization.³⁷⁰

The Ku Klux Klan began patrolling roads and whipping Blacks who travelled at night. They also began collecting information about white Republicans and Blacks who were politically active. As former Confederates, the men could not vote in Tennessee elections, but they could harass and intimidate anyone who dared to vote for policies they opposed. In 1867, Klan members from all around the state met in Nashville. They revised and refined their rules, wrote a constitution called the Prescript and devised an organizational system for spreading new dens throughout the south. The “Invisible Empire,” as they now called themselves, selected Nathan Bedford Forrest as their new Grand Wizard or leader.³⁷¹ Forrest had made his fortune in the Memphis slave trade before the Civil War. During the war, Forrest was known as the “Wizard of the Saddle.” It is likely that the title “Grand Wizard” was derived from this nickname. Forrest was in command at Fort Pillow in 1864 when Unionists and Black Federal Troops were slaughtered, though he was never formally charged for the massacre.³⁷² Forrest’s name drew even more former Confederates to the organization. While the

³⁶⁹ U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. *Memphis Riots and Massacres*. 39th Congr., 1st sess. 1866, Rep. 101. 5, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llss&fileName=1200/1274/llss1274.db&recNum=10>

³⁷⁰ Bartoletti, *They Called Themselves the K.K.K.*, 21-23.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 41-46.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 39.

organization claimed to be selective, many poor white men claimed to have been forced to join. They were threatened with fines and beatings if they did not participate.³⁷³

This “social club” quickly became an instrument of terror throughout the South. Blacks who defied social norms by looking white men in the eye, speaking to white women or doing anything that demonstrated pride were considered “uppity” and subject to abuse from the Klan. Blacks who enjoyed economic success were especially vulnerable to the vigilante justice handed out by the Klan. George Taylor had amassed 60 acres and 2 mules before the Klan broke into his home in the middle of the night. They dragged him outside where they whipped him until his backbone was visible through his wounds. Taylor and his family were forced to abandon their farm and possessions, a loss of about 500 dollars.³⁷⁴

In Tennessee, Klansmen increasingly targeted Radical Republicans as well as politically active Blacks. On August 12, 1868 a group of six masked men approached Lewis Powell’s home in Hickman County. Powell was a member of the Black Union League. Powell hid in the woods as the men advanced. The men asked Powell’s wife for food. When she told them that her family was poor and had none to spare, the men opened fire, killing her. They rode off as Powell ran back to find his wife dead. Governor Brownlow ordered the State Guard to catch the klansmen, but they did not succeed.

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Frustrated with the State Guard’s lack of success, Brownlow hired a private detective named Seymour Barmore to infiltrate the Klan. Barmore managed to get admitted to a den, but was later heard bragging about breaking up the Klan. A message was relayed to Klansmen in Maury County who boarded the train Barmore was on and kidnapped him. Barmore’s body was recovered six weeks later. The Klan had sent a message: anyone who crossed them would die.³⁷⁶

³⁷³ Ibid., 56.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 81.

³⁷⁵ Hardy, “Fare well to all Radicals”

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

As the organization grew, its ties with the Democratic Party grew as well. In Tennessee, Conservative Republicans and former Confederate Democrats were able to reclaim control of the legislature. When a new state constitution was put to a vote in 1870, Klansmen made sure that both Black and white voters voted for it or were too scared to vote at all. The ratification of the 1870 Constitution and the election of John C. Brown, a former Confederate general and Klansmen, meant that the Ku Klux Klan would continue to terrorize the state for many years to come.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁷ Ibid.