5. Daniel Boone, Wilderness Road and the First Settlers of Tennessee

Standards 4.20, 8.20

Essential Question: What impact did Daniel Boone and the Wilderness Road have on Tennessee?

The impact and contributions of a number of individuals in regards to the opening, mapping, and eventual settlement of lands west of the Appalachians cannot be overstated. The perilous mountains largely prevented the American colonists from expanding westward. Then, an English-born physician-turned-land speculator changed everything. In 1750 Dr. Thomas Walker, working for the Loyal Company of Virginia, led an expedition southward along the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, and in doing so made an enormously consequential discovery – the Cumberland Gap. Cumberland Gap, a natural passage through the mountains, would serve as a gateway to the West for generations of explorers and settlers.

Through that gateway flooded a diverse group of individuals known as long hunters. These hunters, enticed by circulating rumors of bountiful game across the mountains, embarked on hunting expeditions typically lasting 6-7 months, setting out in October and returning in April or May. Far from merely poaching game from Indian hunting grounds, the long hunters were responsible for the vast majority of geographical knowledge the American colonists accumulated about the trans-Appalachian West. As tales of their adventures spread throughout the colonies, the long hunters attracted a new element – land speculators. Companies which bought and sold land looked anxiously to the unspoiled, unclaimed wilderness west of the mountains, and with the discovery of the Cumberland Gap saw their opportunity. These companies began hiring the long hunters as mercenary explorers to map and survey trans-Appalachian lands while on their hunting expeditions.

The most famous of these hunters was Daniel Boone, who would ultimately explore and map vast swaths of upper East Tennessee and southern Kentucky largely by himself. By 1764 Boone had been contracted by Richard Henderson’s land company Henderson & Company to survey western lands which might be suitable for claiming and purchase. Over the next several years, with the aid of Boone’s exploration reports, Henderson formulated a plan to purchase huge amounts of land from the Cherokee across the mountains in order to establish his own colony. By March 1775 Henderson’s deal had come together, and the “Transylvania Purchase” was completed. As part of the agreement, white settlers would be allowed the use of 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 Wilderness Road. If the Cumberland Gap was the gateway to the West, then Wilderness Road was the road which ran through it.
Though Henderson’s Transylvania Purchase was later largely invalidated by the Virginia assembly, the dream of western expansion continued unabated. With the carving out of a safe pathway through the Cumberland Gap, settlers began to pour into the western regions. Traditionally remembered as the first permanent white settler in Tennessee, **William Bean** was regardless among the earliest wave of trans-Appalachian migrants. Along with a small group of family and friends, Bean established a small settlement along the Watauga branch of the Holston River in 1769, where he and his party remained for quite some time. Eventually, Bean’s party became founding members and leaders of the Watauga Association established close to their settlement. Bean’s signature is recorded on the famous Watauga Petition of 1776 to the North Carolina legislature, which he helped draft.

While groups such as Bean and the Wataugans remained relatively close to home in the eastern portions of the West, other pioneers pushed further into the frontier. **Thomas Sharpe Spencer**, a long hunter 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 in Tennessee along the 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. Though forced to abandon his initial venture, Spencer returned in the winter of 1779-1780 as part of the expedition commissioned by Richard Henderson and led by Capt. James Robertson and Col. John Donelson with the intent of founding a permanent settlement along the Cumberland River. The settlement they established is today the city of Nashville.
The French and Indian War and the Fort Loudoun Massacre

*Standard 4.22, 8.19*

*Essential Question: What were the causes and consequences of the French and Indian war including the Fort Loudoun Massacre?*

Britain and France competed for land and resources in North America throughout the 1600’s and early 1700’s. 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 resulted. In 1755, British General Braddock was defeated by a combination of French and Native American troops while attempting to reach Fort Duquesne. This led the British to declare war on France in 1756. The fighting that took place in North America was known as the French and Indian War.

During the French and Indian War (1754-1763) both the British and the French depended on their Native American allies to help them fight in North America. This was especially important as the two nations were also fighting in Europe, Cuba, the West Indies, India and the Philippines at the same time. The larger conflict between the nations is known as the Seven Years’ War.

Frontier warfare between settlers and Native Americans led to increased anger toward all Native Americans. Despite seeking Native American tribes as allies, the British misunderstood Native American culture, looked on Native Americans 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. The Cherokee traded deerskins and other items for guns and manufactured goods from Britain. However, a number of events during the French and Indian War led to a break down in the alliance between the Cherokee and British.

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 Native American allies. However, fighting broke out as more and more settlers crossed the mountains into Cherokee territory and competed with the Cherokee for deer and other wild game.

When a group of 38 Cherokee leaders traveled to South Carolina in 1759 to seek peace with the British governor, he had them taken captive. This action angered all the Cherokee even those such as Attakullakulla or Little Carpenter who had strongly supported the British. Attakullkulla arranged the release of the three most prominent captives including the war leader Occonostota by agreeing to turn over the Cherokee who had killed white settlers. When Fort Prince George’s
commander Richard Coytmore refused to release the remaining prisoners, Occonostota’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 surrounded Fort Loudoun and cut off the soldiers’ supply of food. On August 7, 1760 Captain Paul Demere’ surrendered to the Cherokee at Chota. In the surrender agreement the Cherokee promised to allow the soldiers and their families to leave in peace as long as they left their cannons and ammunition. However, the British tried to hide the cannons and ammunition before leaving the fort. This angered the Cherokee who then attacked the retreating soldiers on August 10, 1760. The Cherokee killed 23 soldiers and 3 women and took 120 people hostage. In Cherokee culture, the kin of a person who had been killed had a right and an obligation to seek blood vengeance by killing a member of the killer’s clan. Therefore, the Cherokee viewed the massacre as justified since the British had killed Cherokee prisoners at the fort and had not kept the terms of the surrender.

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. The British sent 2,600 troops into Cherokee territory where they destroyed 15 towns along with the Cherokee’s food supply for winter. By 1762, the Cherokee surrendered and peace was restored, but hard feelings lingered on both sides.

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 expect for a few islands in the Caribbean. Spain gave 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. As a result, France no longer had power in North America. Native Americans 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 and deeply in debt. The British knew that continued warfare with Native Americans would further increase the debt. Therefore, the British issued the Proclamation of 1763 which said that no British subject could settle west of the Appalachian Mountains. Many settlers simply ignored the law and continued to move west.
The Watauga Compact and Watauga Purchase

Standards: 4.25, 8.21

Essential Question: What events contributed to the development of the Watauga settlement?

The first permanent white settler in what is now Tennessee was William Bean, who settled in 1769 on Boone’s Creek, near where it flowed into the Watauga River. Within a year there were several more families in three neighboring communities: Nolichucky, Carter’s Valley, and North Holston. Most had arrived by way of the Great Valley, coming down through Virginia, while some had moved west from North Carolina.

The settlers claimed they had settled within the boundary of Virginia and the Proclamation of 1763. A survey revealed, however, that all the communities except North Holston were outside of the boundaries of both North Carolina and Virginia. The settlements were on land that had been guaranteed to the Cherokee Nation. The government told the settlers that they had to move off of Cherokee land. Instead, the settlers came together in the Watauga settlement and asked the Cherokee if they could lease land along the Watauga River for ten years. The Cherokee agreed.

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. 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 like land titles and dealing with law breakers. 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 represent 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 Wataugans’ state formation “sets a dangerous example to the people of America, of forming governments distinct from and independent of his majesty’s authority.”

In 1775, the Watauga settlement was the site of a most remarkable real estate transaction: the Transylvania Purchase. For several days in mid-March, Richard Henderson of North Carolina negotiated with leaders of the Cherokee Nation. He eventually secured an agreement by which the Cherokee exchanged their claim to all of the Cumberland River Valley and most of Kentucky in exchange for 10,000 pounds of trade goods.
Virginia and North Carolina eventually voided the Transylvania Purchase, but it still had significant consequences for the Wataugans. In the aftermath of the transaction, Wataugan leaders approached the Cherokee to ask that their lease be converted into a purchase. **Attakullakulla, or Little Carpenter** was an important Cherokee chief and diplomat. He favored both the agreement with Henderson and the sale of Watauga to the settlers. Not all Cherokee liked the idea of selling their land. Attakullakulla’s own son, **Dragging Canoe**, opposed both land sales. He believed that the Cherokee had to stop the growth of white settlements or the Cherokee would eventually lose all their land. However, enough Cherokee agreed with Attakullakulla for the sale to be completed. The sale of the Watauga settlement is known as the **Watauga Purchase**.

**Sources:**

Watauga during the Revolutionary War

Standards: 4.34, 8.26

Essential Question: How did the American Revolution effect the Watauga settlement?

In March 1775, the Watauga settlement was the site of a most remarkable real estate transaction: the Transylvania Purchase. For several days in mid-March, Richard Henderson of North Carolina negotiated with leaders of the Cherokee Nation. They eventually agreed to the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals in which the Cherokee exchanged their claim to all of the Cumberland River Valley and most of Kentucky in exchange for 10,000 pounds of trade goods.

Virginia and North Carolina eventually voided the Transylvania Purchase, but it still had significant consequences for Watauga and the Cumberland Settlements. Five days after the transaction, Wataugan leaders approached the Cherokee to ask that their existing lease be converted into a purchase.

Attakullakulla, or Little Carpenter, was an important Cherokee chief and diplomat. He favored both the agreement with Henderson and the sale of Watauga to the settlers. Not all Cherokee liked the idea of selling their land. Attakullakulla’s own son, Dragging Canoe, opposed both land sales. He believed that the Cherokee had to stop the growth of white settlements or the Cherokee would eventually lose all their land. However, enough Cherokee agreed with Attakullakulla for the sale to be completed. The sale of the Watauga settlement and surrounding lands is known as the Watauga Purchase.

Dragging Canoe and other Cherokee who opposed white settlement formed their own new towns in southeast Tennessee and became known as the Chickamauga. The Chickamauga sided with the British during the Revolution and threatened to attack Watauga and the other settlements. The Wataugans asked North Carolina for help in a document known as the Watauga Petition. North Carolina eventually agreed to assist the newly named Washington District which included all of its lands west of the Appalachian Mountains. The Washington District appointed a Committee of Safety including Isaac Shelby and John Sevier and built Fort Watauga to prepare the settlements for attacks. Dragging Canoe and his allies launched a series of attacks against the Watauga settlements in 1776 known as the Cherokee War of 1776. The Wataugans retaliated with a series of attacks on Cherokee towns. The Wataugans were also aided by information from Cherokee leaders like Nanye-hi or Nancy Ward who wanted to maintain peace between the settlement and the Cherokee. Wataugans also crossed the mountains to take part in Revolutionary battles including the Battle of Charleston in 1776.

In 1777, North Carolina created Washington County from what had been Washington District, and the Watauga Association was no longer necessary. The settlement, however, witnessed one more important event associated with the Revolution, when the
“Overmountain Men” met at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River before they crossed the mountains to attack and defeat British Colonel Patrick Ferguson at the Battle of King’s Mountain in 1780.

Sources:

The Battle of King’s Mountain

Standards: 4.31, 8.25

Essential Question: What was the significance of the Battle of King’s Mountain?

Only one month after the historic Transylvania and Watauga Purchases in 1775, the “shot heard ‘round the world” at Lexington signaled the start of the American Revolution. The people of the Washington District quickly recognized that they faced a serious potential threat from the Cherokee who are allied with the British. As a result in 1776, the Washingtonians sent the Watauga Petition to North Carolina asking to be annexed. They also began to construct two forts.

In July of 1776, the Cherokee attacked. The settlers, who had been warned of the coming attack by traders, were able to hold off the Cherokee until reinforcements from the Virginia militia arrived. The settlers then launched their own attack on Cherokee villages which resulted in an estimated two thousand Cherokee deaths. As a result, the Cherokee surrendered in 1777.

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.”

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 on September 25, 1780. Eventually over 1,000 militia or Overmountain men, including some from Virginia gathered at Sycamore Shoals. 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. Armed with inspiration from Doak and five hundred pounds of gunpowder made by Mary Patton, 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 North Carolina South Carolina border. 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.”

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 bitter 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 decimated 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. He was shot down by several men, though Essius Bowman, a free African-American from Virginia, is most often credited with the fatal shot. The remainder of Ferguson’s forces surrendered. 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 nine were hanged before Shelby stopped the proceedings.

The victory at King’s Mountain had two important effects. First, news of the victory reenergized the Patriot spirit throughout the colonies. Years later Thomas Jefferson referred to it as the “joyful announcement of that turn of the tide of success which terminated the Revolutionary War, with the seal of independence.” 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.”

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The Cumberland Settlement

*Standard: 8.26*

*Essential Question: Why was the Cumberland Settlement created and what problems did the early settlers encounter?*

In 1775, **Richard Henderson** purchased 20 million acres of land from the Cherokee in a land deal known as the **Transylvania Purchase**. The lands 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. 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 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.

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.

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**. The Chickamauga were a branch of the Cherokee led by Dragging Canoe who had opposed the Transylvania Purchase. The Chickamauga would be an ongoing threat to the Cumberland Settlement. 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 fort 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. The Cumberland Compact served as the basis for government in the settlement until North Carolina created Davidson County in 1783.

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 gave chase, but were attacked by a large party of Native Americans. According to legend, Charlotte Robertson, wife of James Robertson, saved the men by releasing the hunting dogs inside the fort to attack the Native Americans. 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**. The danger eventually led Donelson to move his family and slaves back the relative safety of Kentucky. Donelson continued to travel to the area and was killed along the Barren River in 1785. 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.

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The Creation and Failure of the State of Franklin

Standards 4.38, 8.29

Essential Question: How did the creation and failure of the State of Franklin reflect the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation?

The creation and ultimate failure of the “Lost” State of Franklin were almost entirely due to the weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation. 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.

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 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 its own treaties with the Cherokee in June 1785, establishing new territorial boundaries and opening up more land for Franklin’s citizens to settle. However, due to Franklin’s lack of legal status, the treaties were 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 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.
In February 1788, Tipton and his small number of followers seized several of John Sevier’s slaves as payment for North Carolina taxes while Sevier was away. When Sevier returned, he went to Tipton’s farm to recover the slaves and a battle broke out between John Sevier’s forces and Tipton’s followers. 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 (Southwest Territory), and within 10 years the territory was admitted to the Union as the State of Tennessee.
William Blount, the Southwest Territory, and Tennessee Statehood

Standards: 4.45, 8.39

Essential Question: What role did William Blount play in Tennessee statehood?

William Blount, the eldest son of Jacob Blount, Sr., and Barbara Gray Blount, was born in Bertie County, North Carolina, on March 26, 1749. He was active in the family mercantile business and later served in the American Revolution as paymaster of the 3rd North Carolina regiment and for the state militia. Like many businessmen of his day, Blount believed the future of the new nation lay beyond the Appalachian Mountains so he accumulated as much western land as possible. He also served in various public offices throughout his life. In 1787, he was appointed as a North Carolina delegate 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. 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 Territory South of the River Ohio was commonly called the Southwest Territory, and 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. In fact Blount had already determined that he must move west in order to protect his vast holdings; his appointment as governor made the task easier.

Blount arrived in the territory in October 1790. He lived first in upper east Tennessee at Rocky Mount. 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, signed in early July, called for additional Cherokee land cessions and set a new boundary. However, the Cherokee were unhappy because they believed Blount had treated them unfairly. 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 with instructions to ask for immediate admission. 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 to statehood. 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. On June 1, 1796, Tennessee was admitted to statehood. John Sevier, former governor of the State of Franklin was elected as Tennessee’s first governor.

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. 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.

<http://www.northcarolinahistory.org/commentary/126/entry>
The Battle of Horseshoe Bend

Standards: 4.51, 4.53, 8.43

Essential Question: What were the causes and consequences of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend?

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. 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. 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.

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 earned the nickname “Old Hickory” by marching alongside his men. 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 would soon expire. However, Jackson’s thoughts differed. The conflict eventually led to a number of men being court-martialed, but the volunteers returned home. 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. A force of American, 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 first 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 Americans 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. 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. Junaluska, the Cherokee chief who saved Jackson’s life during the battle later said, “If I had known that Jackson would drive us from our home, I would have killed him at the Horseshoe.”


New Madrid Earthquake

Standard: 4.52, 8.54

Essential Question: How did the New Madrid Earthquakes affect the land and people of Tennessee?

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.

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.

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.” While the reported death toll was less than 100, the true death toll was likely much higher. Isolation and poor communication made reporting less than accurate. Many residents moved away from the area making once thriving communities ghost towns in a matter of months.

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.


Natchez Trace and the Jackson Purchase

Standards: 4.53, 8.39

Essential Question: How did the Natchez Trace and Jackson Purchase contribute to the settlement of west Tennessee?

By the end of the War of 1812 most of east and middle Tennessee were firmly in the hands of white settlers. The land between the Tennessee and Mississippi rivers remained under the control of the Chickasaw. However, the state government of North Carolina had issued land grants for that area that the Tennessee government wanted to honor. In 1818 Andrew Jackson and Isaac Shelby were sent to negotiate an agreement for the land with the Chickasaw. Jackson and Shelby convinced the Chickasaw to sell tract for three hundred thousand dollars. The region opened for settlement in 1819. Jackson, John Overton and James Winchester quickly established the town of Memphis.

Jackson was already familiar with the area having frequently traveled along the Natchez Trace. The Natchez Trace was originally a series of animal migration routes and Native American trade and travel routes. Early explorers and settlers had used the Trace and as early at 1801 United States troops had made improvements to the area. Jackson used the Trace extensively while commanding Tennessee troops during the War of 1812. The Trace was a vital transportation route linking New Orleans to Nashville and points beyond. “Kaintucks, backwoodsmen from Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio, would float goods down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers and then return home via the Natchez Trace.

<http://www.nps.gov/natr/historyculture/people.htm>

<http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=698>
Elihu Embree

Standards: 4.60, 8.66

Essential Question: What impact did Elihu Embree have on the abolition movement?

Elihu Embree was born in Pennsylvania and moved to Greene County, Tennessee in 1790. Embree and his brother took over the family’s successful ironworks when his father moved to Ohio. Though raised a Quaker, as a young man Embree was a deist and slave owner. However, in 1812 Embree returned to his Quaker faith and became a leader in the anti-slavery movement. Embree freed the slaves he still owned and went so far as to repurchase members of a family who had been separated when he sold them. Embree then freed the family. According to Tennessee law, underage slaves could not be emancipated, so Embree was forced to retain ownership of a slave named Nancy and her four children until they were old enough to be freed. He set aside money in his will to educate the children. He also became a member of Tennessee’s first antislavery society, The Tennessee Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves. The society was founded in 1815 by Charles Osborn at the Lost Creek Meetinghouse in Jefferson County. Manumission is the act of a slaveholder freeing his or her own slaves. Abolition refers to changing laws so that slavery is no longer legal.

The crisis over Missouri statehood prompted Embree and the Manumission society to begin publishing a newspaper to help spread the word about the anti-slavery movement. Embree edited and financed the Manumission Intelligencer, but the Society had final control over the publication. The financial Panic of 1819 hurt the paper, but Embree pressed on. Following the passage of the Missouri Compromise in 1820, Embree decided to launch his own paper over which he would have full control. The Emancipator served as a clearinghouse for information on antislavery meetings and publications throughout the country. Embree began with only six subscribers, but in six months the paper was serving 2,500 subscribers.

Embree’s paper faced a number of challenges including Southern postmasters who refused to deliver the papers. Embree’s finances had been badly damaged by the Panic of 1819 and an unsuccessful business arrangement. The publication costs of the Manumission Intelligencer had hurt his finances further. In his personal life, Embree was forced to deal with the death of his second wife just months after he began the newspaper. Embree was left with seven children to care for. The strain took its toll on Embree who died on December 4, 1820. He had only published seven issues of the Emancipator. After his death, Benjamin Lundy, a fellow Quaker and publisher, moved to Greeneville and began to publish his own anti-slavery newspaper. It would be followed ten years later by William Lloyd Garrison’s famous Liberator. Embree recognized the need for anti-slavery groups throughout the country to share information
and created the *Emancipator* to fill that need. Embree’s newspaper revolutionized the anti-slavery movement.


Francis Wright and Nashoba & Virginia Hill and Free Hill

Standards: 4.60, 8.66

Essential Question: How did Francis Wright and Virginia Hill contribute to abolition in Tennessee?

Francis “Fanny” Wright was a well-educated and wealthy young Englishwoman who came to America in 1818. She and her sister traveled about the country and Wright later wrote a book, *Views on Society and Manners in America*, based on their travels. A number of important people including Thomas Jefferson, Henry Clay, and the Marquis Lafayette were admirers of her work. She and Lafayette developed a deep, personal relationship. When Lafayette visited in 1824, Wright returned as well. On this visit, Wright noticed that a number of the men she met seemed to genuinely dislike the slave system, but were unable to see an alternative to it.

Wright proposed setting up a utopian colony as a social experiment. She wanted to bring together freed slaves and white settlers so that the former slaves could learn to be self-supporting. Lafayette introduced her to Andrew Jackson who helped her locate a 2,000 acre plot of land near Memphis. Because the site was on the Wolf River, Wright decided to name it Nashoba, the Chickasaw word for wolf.

In 1826, members of the colony began clearing land and building cabins. The work was difficult and made worse by sickness and disagreements within the community. The community also faced attacks from outside critics. Religious leaders were particularly critical of Wright’s liberal views on sex. Wright returned to Europe in 1827 to raise money for the colony. When she returned, the colony had strayed from its idealistic roots. The white residents soon left. Wright also left for New Harmony, Indiana. However, Wright could not forget about the people she left behind. In 1827, she returned to Nashoba and offered the take the thirty-one African American residents to Haiti. In Haiti, a nation founded by former slaves, they could live as free people. The residents eagerly took her up on her offer. Nashoba was abandoned and the experiment in equality ended.

Like Wright, Virginia Hill was a wealthy woman. Hill was the daughter of a planter from North Carolina. In 1830, she purchased 2,000 acres of land in what is now Clay County. She then freed her slaves, gave the land to them and moved away. It is unclear exactly what caused her to take this action, but oral tradition in the community holds that four of the freed slaves were her mulatto children. The freed slaves took the surname Free Hill to show that they were free and to show respect to the woman who freed them. The land she gave them also happened to be very hilly and remote therefore the community was also known as Free Hill.

People in Free Hill made a living by farming, and logging. The community at Free Hill served as a refuge for runaway slaves and post-Civil War freedmen. While the isolation of the
community did give the people a degree of protection, they were not completely safe. Night riders sometimes attacked the community and drove off mules and injured residents.

In the 1960’s Free Hill was a thriving small town with two churches, two grocery stores and about 300 residents. Today, only about 100 residents remain. The community continues to take pride in its unique history.


Indian Removal and the Trail of Tears

Standards: 4.56, 8.57

Essential Question: How did the Indian Removal Act of 1830 impact the Cherokee and the United States?

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 agreed to a series of land treaties that reduced their holdings to a small corner in Southeast Tennessee. 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. Most Cherokee wanted to remain on their lands so Cherokee leaders took steps to ensure their people were not forced out.

Many 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. In 1827, the leaders meet at New Echota to write a Constitution for the Cherokee nation based on the United States Constitution. John Ross and other leaders believed these steps would protect the Cherokee from removal. Events beyond his control soon proved the belief to be false.

Two momentous 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 Georgia’s government officials. 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, to cede land along with the Red Sticks they had fought together. The Creek nation was forced to cede twenty-three million acres of land in Alabama and Georgia. 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.

In 1830, Jackson introduced his Indian Removal Act to Congress. Jackson argued the removal helped Native Americans by removing them from the corrupting influences of white society and allowing them to maintain their distinctive way of life. Few among the Cherokee 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. 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 Worchester v. Georgia. In this case, missionary Samuel Worchester had challenged Georgia’s claim to Cherokee lands. The court ruled in favor of the Cherokee. In the majority
opinion John Marshall wrote that Indian nations were “‘distinct, independent political communities retaining their original natural rights” and that Cherokee Nation remained a separate, sovereign nation with a legitimate title to its national territory.” 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. 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 5 million dollars. Ross protested that Ridge and the other 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. A small number of Cherokee were able to evade the military and remained in the mountains of Western North Carolina.

Men, women and children were forced from their homes with nothing but the clothes on their backs. The land and possessions they were forced to leave behind were immediately seized by white settlers. They were marched to stockades where they spent a miserable summer with very little protection from the weather. Sickness spread quickly in to crowded stockades and many Cherokee died. When the Cherokee finally began the long journey west they faced freezing temperatures and very little food. John Burnett, a soldier on the journey, later wrote that “I have known as many as twenty-two of them to die in one night of pneumonia due to ill treatment, cold, and exposure.” John Ross’ wife, Quatie, died after giving away her only blanket. She was one of an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 Cherokee who died on the “trail where they cried,” commonly known as the Trail of Tears.


John Ross

Standards: 4.56

Essential Question: What role did John Ross play in Cherokee removal?

John Ross was born in Turkey Town on the Coosa River in Alabama in 1790. His family then moved to Lookout Mountain where his father ran a store. The store served the Cherokee community and allowed Ross to learn about traditional Cherokee customs and traditions. Ross’ biracial family spoke English at home and practiced European traditions. In fact, Ross may not have spoken Cherokee himself.

Ross attended school in Tennessee and married. He began to sell goods to the United States government and ran a store near present day Chattanooga on the Tennessee River. By 1827, Ross had accumulated enough wealth to begin a plantation and ferry business near the junction of the Oostanaula and Etowah rivers. During this same period the Cherokee formed the new Cherokee Nation with a Constitution based on that of the United States. Ross was known for his diplomatic skills and in 1828 was chosen to lead the newly formed nation as Principal Chief.

At the same time white Georgians were increasing their demand for the removal of the Cherokees from the Southeast. When gold was discovered on Cherokee land in 1828, a gold rush began and made the demands for removal even stronger. In 1830, President Jackson pushed Congress to pass the Indian Removal Act. Ross believed that because the Cherokee had formed a republican government, had the support of Whig politicians and the United States Supreme Court, they would not be removed. Other Cherokee leaders, including Major Ridge, a onetime ally of Ross saw it differently. They believed that the best hope for the Cherokee was to take the money offered by the United States and move west on their own terms. In 1835, Major Ridge and other Cherokee leaders signed the treaty of New Echota without Ross’ knowledge or consent. Though Ross’ allies in Congress tried to block it, the treaty passed in the Senate by one vote. Ross continued to fight removal until it became inevitable. He then negotiated with the United States government to provide for supplies along the way. Sadly, his preparations could not prevent the horrors of the journey that came to be called the Trail of Tears.

Upon reaching Indian Territory, present day Oklahoma, Ross encouraged his people to establish farms, businesses and schools. 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. 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.
Sequoyah

Standards: 4.54, 8.56

Essential Question: What contributions did Sequoyah make to the Cherokee?

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. While he was sometimes known by his English name of George Gist, Sequoyah was raised in the traditions of the Cherokee. Sequoyah was silversmith, farmer and soldier. 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 Native Americans 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. 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. In 1821, Sequoyah and his daughter publically demonstrated the language for the first time. Within five years, literacy rates among the Cherokee far surpassed their white neighbors.

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. 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. 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 and evidence of the successful civilization of the Cherokee nation. The Phoenix was also a useful tool for spreading news about the crisis.


Memphis as Cotton Capital

Standard: 8.52

Essential Question: Why did Memphis become the Cotton Capital of the South?

The story of Memphis began with the Jackson Purchase in 1819. The Chickasaw sold all their lands in Tennessee and Kentucky for $300,000. John Overton had long planned a settlement along the Mississippi’s fourth bluff. Along with partners James Winchester and Andrew Jackson, he began plans 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. 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. 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. Another problem for Memphis was the belief that it was unhealthy. The impression of ill health was seemingly verified by periodic outbreaks of dengue fever, malaria, smallpox and yellow fever. Lastly, a sandbar near the port made docking difficult.

Memphis’ fortunes began to change in 1832 when the Chickasaw treaties cleared northern Mississippi of 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. 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.

The Civil War years were difficult for Memphis like most other Southern towns. The war meant that cotton production and trade declined. Following the war, the cotton industry rebounded and in 1874 the Memphis Cotton Exchange was founded. The Exchange set the rules and prices for buying and selling cotton in the mid-South region. Today, computerized trading has replaced the shouting voices of the cotton exchange. Cotton production has also changed, but continues to play a major role in the economy and culture of the Memphis area.

Houston, Crockett and the War for Texas Independence

Standards: 4.62, 8.59

Essential Question: What roles did Sam Houston and David “Davy” Crockett play in Texas’ independence movement?

In the 1820’s Texas was a vast unsettled territory that belonged to Spain. To encourage settlement, Spain offered large tracts of land to agents, called empersarios, who promised to bring families to settle on the land. 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. 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 4 years. In return settlers were supposed to learn Spanish, obey Mexican law and convert to Catholicism. 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 many immigrated with their slaves.

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. Some American settlers began to call for independence, but Austin and others looked for a peaceful resolution. A number of small scale conflicts between Texans and the Mexican military occurred between 1830 and September, 1835. Due to the rising tensions, the Mexican military commander decided to retrieve a cannon that had been loaned to the town of Gonzales for its defense against Native American 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 to be the first battle of the Texas Revolution. Following the Battle of Gonzales, Texas called for volunteers to join its army. Two Tennesseans, Sam Houston and David “Davy” Crockett answered the call.

Houston was already an 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. 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. 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.
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. 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 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. 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. While sources disagree about the exact circumstances of Crockett’s death, he and the other defenders were killed.

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. 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.

One of Houston’s first acts as president was to seek annexation by the United States. Southerners favored the addition of 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 to avoid both conflict over slavery and war with Mexico and therefore declined to annex Texas. Houston served two terms as President of the Lone Star Republic before Texas became a state in 1845. 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.
James K. Polk

Standards: 4.63, 8.61

Essential Question: As president, how did James K. Polk change the United States?

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. Polk was a serious and sickly child. At the age of 16, he underwent a painful operation for urinary 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.

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.

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. 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 in 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. 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. 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. His victory in the election was due in large part to his promise to annex Texas and control the Oregon country. 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.

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.

The Mexican War was controversial in the United States because many people viewed it as a war to expand slavery. 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. 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 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. 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.


Secession in Tennessee, Hurst Nation, and the State of Scott

Standards: 5.6, 8.75

Essential Question: Why was Tennessee divided on the question of secession and how did that division affect Tennessee during the Civil War?

As the turbulent 1850’s 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 almost universally 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 farming difficult, there were few slaves and less interest in expanding slavery. In Middle Tennessee where slaves labored on tobacco plantations as well as smaller farms, the population’s views on slavery and its expansion west were more divided.

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. 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. 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 ballot.

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. Secessionists and unionists campaigned throughout the state. A state convention on secession was rejected by 55% of voters. Voters had also been asked to select delegates to attend if the convention were held. More than 75% of the delegates selected were unionists. 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 of 1861 and June 1861 a number of events occurred that caused many Tennesseans to shift their support to the Confederacy. First, Lincoln decided to resupply the troops
at Fort Sumter. This led the Confederacy to attack the fort on April 12, 1861. Following the battle, Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 troops. 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.” 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. 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 and Virginia and East Tennessee and Georgia railroads prior to a Union invasion. The 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. 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. The leading unionist was Fielding Hurst. Hurst was a slave owner 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. 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.

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

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.


Forts Henry and Donelson

Standards: 5.11, 8.80

Essential Questions: What were the outcomes of the Battles of Fort Henry and fort Donelson? What was the significance of these battles?

The Fort Henry Campaign, February 1862

In early 1862, as the Union army struggled in the East, 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. 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.” 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.

The Fort Donelson Campaign, February 1862

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 13, the 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 Henry. Fort Donelson, however, proved formidable and well-equipped. After damaging a handful of Foote’s vessels, Confederate gunners had repulsed the attack. Grant then decided to hold his lines and wait for the boats to be repaired.

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2 *O.R.*, Ibid., 121.
3 *O.R.*, Ibid., 153.
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.5

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 (enemy’s right)...”6 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. Grant replied that he would accept “no terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender.”7 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 forty pieces of artillery, and a large amount of stores, horses, and other public property.”8 U.S. Grant’s 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. 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.

5 McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 400-01.
7 McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 402.
Battle of Shiloh

Standards: 5.11, 8.80

Essential Questions: What was the outcome of the Battle of Shiloh? What was the significance of the Battle of Shiloh?

After victories at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, the Union army in the West seemed ready to defeat the Confederates anywhere they were. The Union Army of the Tennessee, led by Ulysses S. Grant, pushed deep into the state with the idea of linking up with Don Carlos Buell’s Army of the Ohio and pursuing the rebel army in Mississippi. The Confederates wanted to force Grant out of Tennessee. Grant moved his army to a small port called Pittsburgh Landing located on the western section of the Tennessee river. A small church named Shiloh, meaning “place of peace” in Hebrew stood nearby. It was there that the Confederates attacked on April 6, 1862. After two days of hard fighting, 20,000 men were either killed or wounded. 9 It was, up to that time, the largest battle to ever take place in the Western Hemisphere.

After defeating the Confederates at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, Grant continued to chase the rebels. He knew the defeated rebel 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. 10 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 rebel force. 11 Although Grant had heard rumors of a Confederate force advancing on his 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.” 12

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. 13 Knowing that Buell was seeking to

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link up with Grant’s army, Johnston moved out in early April, ordering his troops “forward to offer battle near Pittsburg.”

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.” The southerners pushed back Union forces all along the front, which stretched six miles. Grant, still at headquarters awaiting Buell, heard the gunfire at breakfast and reached the battlefield around 9 a.m.

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 group of brave soldiers held a small part of the collapsing Union line. The Confederates labeled this area the “Hornets’ Nest”. Upon Grant’s order, and despite being outnumbered four to one, Prentiss 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. The Confederates had, as Beauregard described, won a “complete victory” on April 6, but it did so at a heavy cost. 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.”

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. 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.

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16 McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 409.
17 McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 410.
19 Ibid., p. 384.
21 McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 410.
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. 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 won field of Shiloah [sic] will have a name among the great battlefields of the world,” stated the Memphis Daily Appeal. 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. Shiloh foreshadowed what the war would become, for the next three years would see battle after battle of a similar, horrendous magnitude.

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22 Ibid., 413.
23 Memphis Daily Appeal, April 9, 1862.
Battle of Chickamauga

Standards: 5.11, 8.80

Essential Questions: What was the outcome of the Battle of Chickamauga? What was the significance of the 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. It was by that creek in early autumn 1863 that two large armies, 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.” 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 in Bragg’s army floundered. 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.

“No effort will be spared to bring him (Rosecrans) to an engagement whenever the chances shall favor us,” reported Bragg on September 4. 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. 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.”

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 22.
Bragg sent false deserters to the Union army who reported that the rebels 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 caught wind of what the Confederates were up to and positioned his own force along the West Chickamauga Creek.29 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.”30 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 rebel 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 Confederates all day. “We drove the enemy in front of us steadily to-day [sic],” Thomas reported.31 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.”32

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 Yankee 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.”33 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.34

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repeated Confederate attacks before themselves dropping back toward Chattanooga. For his stand and his leadership, Thomas was thereafter nicknamed the Rock of Chickamauga.\(^{35}\)

The rebels had won an overwhelming victory. The Union had been pushed back to Chattanooga. Bragg, however, did not push the advantage and destroy Rosecrans before he could reach fortified Chattanooga. Looking over his army, however, Bragg was horrified at the 20,000 casualties they had suffered. 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.”\(^{36}\) Rosecrans would make it to the fortifications of Chattanooga. Bragg would follow him there and place the town under siege. 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.”\(^{37}\)

Battle of Franklin

Standards: 5.11, 8.80

Essential Questions: What was the outcome of the Battle of Franklin? What was the significance of the Battle of Franklin?

While George 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 State, move into Virginia, link up with Robert E. Lee, and annihilate both Sherman and Ulysses S. Grant. Bell’s plan was overambitious and, in a sense, delusional. One historian has even written that Bell’s plan “seemed to have been scripted in never-never land.” Moving northward into Tennessee with 40,000 men, Bell 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.” 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.

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 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.

40 McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 812.
41 Ibid.
Across the field stormed twenty-thousand 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. There, savage hand-to-hand combat broke out, and the rebels were pushed back. 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 (they had driven off Schofield, after all), the heavy toll taken by Hood’s army transformed Franklin into a grievous defeat. The Army of Tennessee (Confederate) had lost 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._

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

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43 _Brownlow’s Knoxville Whig, and Rebel Ventilator_, December 7, 1864.
Battle of Nashville

Standards: 5.11, 8.80

Essential Questions: What was the outcome of the Battle of Nashville? What was the significance of the Battle of Nashville?

Confederate General John Bell Hood’s Army of Tennessee had been devastated by Union forces at Franklin. Nevertheless, in December of 1864, Hood and his limping troops pursued the Union Army to Nashville. Once there, Hood ordered entrenchments dug and had his army place Tennessee’s capital under siege. Facing Hood was General George H. Thomas, Union hero at Chickamauga. For a time, the two did nothing but dig in and wait for the other to make a move. When Thomas finally struck, he did so with a daring and military brilliance that dashed any Confederate hope of regaining Tennessee. The Battle of Nashville represents the Confederacy’s last hope for success in the western theater.

In early December, after suffering nearly 7,000 casualties at Franklin, John Bell Hood dragged his army of 40,000 men to the outskirts of Nashville where they 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 patrolled the waters and kept any reinforcements west of the river. 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 halfhearted 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.”

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.

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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. 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. 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.” 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. 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 for 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.

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32 Ibid.
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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 Yankee 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.” 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

33 Ibid., 22.
34 McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 671-72.
37 Ibid., 135.
38 McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 672.
U.S. President, James A. Garfield. 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.

The rebels had won an overwhelming victory. The Union had been pushed back to Chattanooga. Bragg, however, did not push the advantage and destroy Rosecrans before he could reach fortified Chattanooga. Looking over his army, however, Bragg was horrified at the 20,000 casualties they had suffered. 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.” Rosecrans would make it to the fortifications of Chattanooga. Bragg would follow him there and place the town under siege. 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.”

40 McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom., 672-73.  
42 Memphis Daily Appeal, September 21, 1863.
Battle of Lookout Mountain (Chattanooga)

Standards: 5.11, 8.80

Essential Questions: What was the outcome of the Battle of Lookout Mountain?

What was the significance of the Battle of Lookout Mountain?

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. The standoff at Chattanooga came at the end of an exhausting struggle for the city which had lasted since the summer. The Confederates had been forced from Chattanooga and into northern Georgia. Bragg’s army then regrouped and attacked Rosecrans’s Federals as they advanced south. In late September, the campaign had its explosive moment at Chickamauga where combined casualties reached 34,000. After such a horrific fight, 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, who became known as “The Rock of Chickamauga,” stayed and fought and averted an overwhelming Union disaster. President Lincoln said Rosecrans was “confused and stunned like a duck hit on the head.” 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 rebels 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. With the Union Army of the Cumberland on the verge of destruction, Lincoln took action. 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.” Once Grant had secured a route for supplies, he decided to attack and break the rebel siege of Chattanooga.

44 Ibid.
45 Ibid., 676.
For three weeks, the two armies faced each other and did not blink. During that time, the Confederates made a critical mistake. Jefferson Davis had deemed it “essential” to wipe out the Yankees in Chattanooga, but he also desired to recapture Knoxville, which was occupied by Union General Ambrose Burnside. 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, late in November, 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 Yankees 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 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.

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. 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 bluecoats stormed upward, all the while chanting “Chickamauga! Chickamauga!,” and the terrified rebel defenders turned and ran. Bragg was puzzled by the “bad conduct in veteran troops who had never before failed in any duty assigned them.” Some Union troops referred to their victory as a “miracle at Missionary Ridge.” 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 proved redeeming for Northern morale and catastrophic for Southern optimism about winning the war. Second, the victory at Chattanooga showed Grant to be the top commander of Union forces, a title that would be bestowed upon him officially the following spring. Third, the Confederate defeat placed the rebels 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.

Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest proved such a menace to Federal forces throughout the Civil War that Union General William T. Sherman stated that it would be wise to “follow Forrest to the death, if it cost 10,000 lives and breaks the Treasury.”¹ While Sherman referred to Forrest as “the very devil,” another word that is consistently used to describe the military career of Nathan Bedford Forrest is “genius.” One historian has written, “Military observers at the time and later concluded that Forrest was a natural military genius.”² Even Sherman, sworn enemy of Forrest, admitted that the Confederate General possessed a “genius for strategy that was original and to me, incomprehensible.”³ During the war, Forrest was renowned for his daring and his courage. He had twenty-nine horses shot out from under him and was himself wounded several times. Nevertheless, he won successes against Union armies, usually larger than his own, in battle after battle.

Forrest was born the eldest of eleven children to a blacksmith named William Forrest and Mariam Beck in Marshall County, Tennessee on July 13, 1821. After the death of his father and up to his mother’s remarriage, Forrest supported the family himself. Afterward, he went to Texas, returned to Tennessee, and married Mary Montgomery in 1845. In 1857, Forrest made a fortune in Memphis selling land and slaves. He was running a profitable plantation when the war broke out in 1861.⁴

When Tennessee voted to leave the Union that June, Forrest sided with his home state. A skilled horseman, Forrest enlisted as a private in a cavalry regiment. As he was well-known in Memphis, a handful of his friends petitioned Tennessee Governor Isham Harris to commission Forrest as an officer. Forrest was quickly made a colonel and permitted to form his own cavalry regiment.

Forrest quickly developed a fast-paced, aggressive style of fighting battles that would become his trademark. He aimed to keep Union forces in one place with a frontal assault and then rapidly attack both sides at once. Forrest himself led the charges and engaged in hand-to-hand combat on several occasions. When Union forces under Ulysses S. Grant besieged Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River, Forrest grew impatient with his commanding officers who

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³ Ibid., 263.
⁴ Ibid., 262.
had decided to surrender. Disgusted with their admission of defeat, Forrest led his regiment on a late-night breakout through enemy lines. Days later, when Nashville surrendered, Forrest secured the Confederate rear guard as the army retreated into Mississippi.\(^5\)

Forrest played an important role in the Battle of Shiloh. He led a number of cavalry charges to slow down the advancing Union troops on the second day of battle. Following Shiloh, Forrest remained in west Tennessee to attack Grant’s supply lines. After the Battle of Chickamauga, Forrest urged Bragg to attack the Union before they could reach Chattanooga. His advice was ignored and Forrest obtained an independent command in west Tennessee.\(^6\)

The most controversial events of Forrest’s military career occurred on April 1864 when Forrest attacked Fort Pillow outside of Memphis. The fort was garrisoned by African American soldiers and Tennessee unionists. Approximately half of the 600 men in the fort were killed. Many of these men were killed as they attempted to surrender. 67% of the dead were members of the U.S. Colored Troops\(^7\). Whether Forrest ordered the killings or lost control of his men remains unclear. The Fort Pillow Massacre was widely publicized in the North.

Forrest took part in a number of other major battles including the Battle of Franklin on November 30, 1864. Following the Confederate defeat at Nashville, Forrest once again slowed down the Union advance so that the Confederates could retreat. Forrest ultimately surrendered in May of 1865.\(^8\) Following the war, Forrest once again gained fame as the first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. Forrest traveled throughout the South promoting the Klan along with his railroad ventures. Forrest returned to Memphis where he died on October 29, 1877.

\(^7\) Ibid, 321.
\(^8\) Ibid, 321.
Sam Watkins

Standards: 5.15, 8.79

Essential Question: What Role did Sam Watkins and Company H of the First Tennessee Infantry play in the Civil War?

Samuel Rush “Sam” Watkins was born June 26, 1839, in Mount Pleasant (Maury County), Tennessee. Sam Watkins was born into a planter class family. Sam’s father Frederick owned more than 100 slaves on two plantations in Maury County. The Watkins family was the 3rd wealthiest family in Maury County.

Sam Watkins enrolled in Jackson College in Columbia, Tennessee, but at the age of 21 enlisted in the Confederate Army after Tennessee seceded from the Union in 1861. Watkins originally enlisted in the “Bigby Greys” of the 3rd Tennessee Infantry in Mount Pleasant. However, in the spring of 1861, Watkins transferred to the “Maury Greys” of Company H of the First Tennessee Infantry. Sam Watkins served as part of Company H throughout the duration of the Civil War. Company H was involved in many of the Civil Wars most important battles including: Shiloh, Corinth, Murfreesboro (Stones River), Chickamauga, Missionary Ridge (Chattanooga), Atlanta, Franklin, and Nashville. Sam Watkins was one of only seven of the original 120 soldiers enlisted in Company H still part of the unit when General Joseph E. Johnston’s Army of Tennessee surrendered to General William Tecumseh Sherman in North Carolina in April, 1865.

Sam Watkins is best known for his memoir *Company Aytch: Or, a Side Show of the Big Show*. Written in 1882, *Company Aytch* is a personal narrative following Watkins’s involvement in Company H throughout the Civil War. Some historians question the accuracy of some accounts within the book because it was written nearly 20 years after the Civil War. Despite these questions, *Company Aytch* has remained one of the best primary sources about the common soldier's Civil War experience. Watkins’ memoir gained new fame when Ken Burns used sections from it in his acclaimed series *The Civil War*.

Andrew Johnson

Standards: 5.15, 5.22

Essential Questions: What role did Andrew Johnson play during the Civil War? What factors led to Johnson’s impeachment?

Andrew Johnson was born on December 29, 1808 in Raleigh, North Carolina. Johnson’s father was a porter at an inn and his mother worked as a laundress and seamstress. Johnson 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 slaves who worked as servants in the Johnson home. Johnson began his political career in 1829 as an alderman. In the 1830’s 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 slaves. Johnson became governor of Tennessee in 1853 and left the governorship in 1857 to become a Senator. 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. 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. Radical Republicans wanted to punish the South for the war. They believed that Johnson was too friendly towards the South, in too much of a hurry to reincorporate the former Confederates back into the union, and too unwilling to give civil rights to African Americans. When Johnson vetoed the Freedman’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. 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.

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

Matthew Fontaine Maury

Standards: 5.15

Essential Question: How did Matthew Maury contribute to the Confederate Civil War effort?

Matthew Maury was born in Fredericksburg, Virginia on January 14, 1806. Maury moved to Tennessee with his family in 1811. Maury joined the navy in 1825 and spent the rest of his life outside of Tennessee. Maury was an accomplished mathematician and geographer. He published a book titled *A New Theoretical and Practical Treatise on Navigation* that was widely used. In 1842, Maury was named superintendent of the Navy Depot of Charts and Instruments. Maury became the first man to describe the Gulf Stream and mark sea routes across the Atlantic.

When Virginia seceded, Maury resigned from the U.S. Navy and joined the Confederate Navy in 1861. He was sent to Europe to study torpedoes (mines). Maury developed a system for electrically detonating mines, but the war ended before it could be used.

Maury returned to Virginia and continued to write and teach at the Virginia Military Institute. His work on oceanography earned him the nickname “Pathfinder of the Seas.” Maury died on February 1, 1873 and is buried in Virginia.

Sam Davis: Boy Hero of the Confederacy

Standard: 8.79

Essential Question: Who was Sam Davis and what part did he play in the Confederacy during the Civil War?

Sam Davis was born October 6, 1842 in Rutherford County Tennessee. He was one of 12 children and the oldest son of Charles Lewis and Jane Simmons Davis. Charles Lewis, Sam’s father, was a wealthy businessman and plantation owner. He married Margaret Saunders and they had four children together. Margaret passed away in the late 1840’s. Charles then married Jane Simmons and they had eight more children. Charles Lewis owned 51 slaves and became a prominent businessman selling cotton and other goods.

At the age of 18, Sam attended his first year at the Western Military Institute in Nashville, TN. In 1861, he left the military institute and joined the 1st Tennessee Infantry Regiment. Sam took part in the Shenandoah Valley Campaign and the Battle of Shiloh. He was wounded in the Battle of Perryville. After recovering from injuries he received in the Battle of Perryville, he joined the Coleman Scouts.

The Coleman Scouts were a courier service in which young, unmarried men with good horsemanship skills and knowledge of the land were used to exchange information. They exchanged information about the movement of Union Soldiers, as well as personal information between the generals. Sam’s half-brother John was also a part of the Coleman Scouts and is known as one of the men who helped to establish the unit. Henry Shaw also known as E. Coleman led the scouts. Shaw was captured around the same time as Davis, but later escaped.

In November 1863, Sam Davis was heading south to deliver papers to army headquarters. However, before he could reach his destination Union Soldiers captured him outside of Pulaski, Tennessee. He was taken to Pulaski to General Dodge and was found carrying information about the fortifications and movements of Union troops. There was also a sealed letter in his boot from E. Coleman to General Bragg. Because of the documents found on Davis, he was charged with being a courier of mails and as a spy.

General Dodge felt as if the information contained within the papers could only come from someone that was an informant behind the Union lines. Dodge tried to convince Davis to give up his informant, but he would not. He offered Davis his freedom, a horse and his firearms in return for the name, again Davis refused. Dodge then assembled a Federal Court Martial to try him. They convicted Davis of both spying and being a courier.

While in the jail awaiting his hanging, he wrote goodbye letters to both his mother and father. He left information about where to obtain the items he was leaving for them when they came for his body. Davis spent the next day and night before his hanging with the Chaplain James Young. Davis requested that the chaplain sing “On Jordan’s Stormy Banks I Stand” with him before he was hanged. It was his mother’s favorite hymn.
The next morning he was taken to the gallows. Davis was made to ride atop of his own coffin to the spot where he would be hanged. For the final time, General Dodge offered his freedom in exchange for information on the informant. Davis firmly stated that “If I had a thousand lives to live, I would give them all rather than betray a friend or my country.” On November 27, 1863 Sam Davis was hanged at the age of 21.

Several weeks passed before his family found out that a Confederate spy had been hanged. They sent their neighbor John Kennedy and their son John to Pulaski to identify what they hoped would not be Davis’ body. Upon arriving in Pulaski, Kennedy and John were taken to the grave where the body was exhumed and was unfortunately identified as Sam Davis. His body was taken back to Smyrna for a proper burial. Davis’ family first buried him near the creek. After the war, his body was moved closer to the house in a memorial garden. Although Sam Davis had a short life, the impact of his actions would not be forgotten. Davis story is said to be a story of valor told by Union and Confederate soldiers alike. In the years following the Civil War, white southerners romanticized the causes and outcomes of the war. It was referred to as the “Lost Cause.” Davis’ story was also romanticized and he was considered to be a hero of the “Lost Cause” During this era, numerous memorials were built to honor him. In 1915, a statue of Sam Davis, Boy Hero of the Confederacy was placed on the grounds of the Tennessee State Capitol.


William G. “Parson” Brownlow

Essential Question: What role did William Brownlow play in the Civil War?

William Gannaway "Parson" Brownlow (1805-1877) was an influential East Tennessee minister, journalist, and governor. On the eve of the Civil War, his newspaper, popularly known as Brownlow's Whig, reached nearly eleven thousand subscribers across the nation. The Parson was a prominent spokesperson for the Whig Party and a staunch defender of the Union during the United States Civil War.

Born the son of poor farmers in 1805, William Brownlow was orphaned at the age of 11. In 1825, having tried his hand at farming and carpentry, he had a religious experience at a camp meeting and entered into a career as a circuit riding minister in the Holston Conference. After 10 years riding through the mountains preaching to all who would listen, Parson Brownlow married Eliza O'Brien and settled down to work for her father in the family iron mill at Elizabethton. Soon the former preacher, who had proved to be a forceful speaker and writer, was approached by members of the local Whig Party to edit their failing newspaper, the Republican and Manufacturer's Record. Parson Brownlow accepted the offer. Parson Brownlow became, because of his wit, venom, and violent writing style, one the most noted or notorious journalists in American history. The Republican and Manufacturer's Record, after name changes and moves to Jonesboro and Knoxville became known as Brownlow's Whig, the most famous newspaper in Tennessee.

With the coming of secession, Brownlow found himself a major force in the attempt to preserve the Union. In East Tennessee, 69% of voters opposed secession in the statewide referendum of June 1861 even as 86% of voters elsewhere supported secession. Brownlow was a spokesman and leader for the strongly pro-Union inhabitants of East Tennessee.

Brownlow and many of his supporters were pro-slavery (he himself owned slaves used as servants at various times), but were willing to consider abolishing slavery if necessary to save the Union. With the Whig as his platform, Brownlow put all his effort into attacking secession and the people who supported it with his usual exaggerated insults. Despite his efforts, Tennessee joined the Confederacy in July, 1861. Losing the immediate argument with the secessionists did not silence him; Brownlow continued to use his paper to denounce the Confederacy and its leaders without restraint. At last, exasperated by his abuse and facing a rebellion in East Tennessee generated by Brownlow's venomous words, the Confederate authorities in Knoxville arrested him and ultimately expelled him from the South.

Exile did not end Brownlow's war with the Confederacy. Due to the publicity generated by his resistance and arrest in Tennessee, he found himself a hero to the North and used this newfound fame as a weapon against the South. He lectured across the North, urging the reconquering of the seceding states. Brownlow’s message reached even more people through Parson Brownlow's Book, which used vivid language to tell the story of his resistance to the Confederacy.
With the war's end, Parson Brownlow and his fellow East Tennessee Unionists formed a state government with Brownlow as governor. Publicly, as governor, his attitude was one of revenge upon the Confederates, though privately his attitude was charitable and forgiving toward individuals. However, most Tennesseans disliked Brownlow’s plans for revenge; they wanted to forgive and forget. Brownlow’s reputation was damaged by his allies who took advantage of Brownlow’s poor health to steal state funds. However, because his party and the Federal army controlled the state, Brownlow was elected to the Senate in 1868, where he accomplished little due to his poor health. After his service in the Senate, Brownlow returned to East Tennessee, where he remained popular. Parson Brownlow died after years of illness in 1877.
David Farragut

Standard: 8.77

Essential Question: What role did David Farragut play in the Civil War?

On July 26, 1866, David Glasgow Farragut was named the first full admiral in American history. He was honored for a career in the navy that spanned over fifty years. One historian wrote that Farragut was similar to Ulysses S. Grant in that “he possessed great force of character rather than a subtle intellect.” It was for his service during the Civil War, however, that Farragut earned his most recognition and praise.

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. The story goes that Porter’s elderly father, himself once a master sailor in the U.S. Navy under George Washington, was fishing and collapsed with sunstroke. Farragut’s father found him and took him to the Farragut home, where the family cared for the dying Porter until the end. In order to repay the tenderness of the Farragut family, Commodore Porter adopted young James and became his guardian.

James began service in the navy with his new father when he was only nine years old. In the War of 1812, James served with Porter in a sea battle with two British ships off the coast of Chile. A gunner on their ship, the Essex, was struck by a cannonball and fell against the young Farragut, pushing him backward through an open hatch. Farragut struck his head and received the only wound he would ever receive during his naval career. In recognition of the battle, he changed his name to David, in honor of his adopted father.

Afterward, David Farragut’s journeys took him to Europe and the Gulf of Mexico. During the Mexican War, he served as captain of the sloop Saratoga. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Farragut awaited orders in Norfolk, Virginia. As a southerner, he had to decide whether to fight for the land of his birth or for the government he flourished under. In the end, Farragut believed President Abraham Lincoln was justified in his military actions against the southern rebels. Therefore, Farragut decided to remain a U.S. naval officer. When heckled by southern leaders who tried to get him to renege and join the Confederacy, Farragut responded, “Mind what I tell you: You fellows will catch the devil before you get through with this business.”

After a short time at desk duty, Farragut was assigned to oversee the West Gulf Blockade Squadron and their operations in the Gulf of Mexico.

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12 Ibid., 684.
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 incomplete ironclads still moored to their docks. 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 and won the river capturing cities and frustrating Confederates. The only city he failed to capture was Vicksburg, along 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.

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 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 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.

In 1865, Farragut was one of the first Union officers to enter Richmond after its fall. After the war, Farragut settled in New York, where the government awarded him $50,000 to buy a home. To commemorate his lifelong service to the navy, he was given the rank of full admiral in 1866. He was the first American to hold such rank. The newly-minted full admiral went on a European goodwill tour. In 1870, while inspecting a naval yard in New Hampshire, Farragut died after suffering a heart attack.

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14 Davis, “Farragut, David Glasgow,” 684.